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# SONS OF GOD

## Sermons

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TO  
THE MEMORY OF MY DEAR FRIEND,  
**Joseph W. Alsop, M.D.,**  
A HIGH MINDED, HONORABLE MAN,  
**This Little Volume**  
IS  
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.



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I.

THE FAMILY RECORD.



# SONS OF GOD.

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## I.

### THE FAMILY RECORD.

Luke III. 23 - 38.

"Jesus was about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph . . . which was the son of David . . . which was the son of Judah . . . which was the son of Jacob . . . which was the son of . . . Isaac . . . which was the son of Abraham . . . which was the son of Noah . . . which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God."

THE third chapter of St. Luke contains the strangest family-tree ever erected. Its root is God; its stem Adam, Noah, Abraham and his descendants, and the fruit is Jesus. There is no break in the descent anywhere. There is no intimation in the record anywhere that at some point a new kind of being has come in. The author seems to assume with the strangest simplicity that all the persons named are of the same species. That "like begets like" is one of the truisms of human science and human experience. When father, son, and grandson are spoken of, it is assumed without question that they all belong to the same kind of being.

Now, here stands Adam in the direct line of descent between God and Jesus. The *stirps* is the

same. Humanity is Divine. Which is but another way of saying that "we are God's offspring." This fundamental assumption that men literally share in the nature of God, as a child shares in the nature of its father, I believe to be the starting-point of all religion, and the rescuing this truth from oblivion to be the distinctive work of Jesus Christ. It is the fact which makes revelation possible. Only beings of the same kind can hold intercourse. A man can have no commerce with a stone. A fish cannot speak with a bird. Only a god can hold converse with God.

There is a strange notion current in Western theology that human nature was transformed by the "Fall." It was indeed, but not in the way commonly imagined. When Adam came in sight of the "Tree of knowledge of good and evil," God said if they eat of it "they shall become as gods." What He said was true. When they attained the point where they could comprehend moral distinctions, they passed beyond the brute, and took their places as sovereign citizens in the republic of spirits.

"And so I live, you see,  
Go through the world, try, prove, reject,  
Prefer, still struggling to effect  
My warfare; happy that I can  
Be crossed and thwarted as a man;  
Not left in God's contempt apart,  
With ghastly, smooth life, dead at heart,  
Tame in earth's paddock as her prize."

This Christian genealogical table answers the question which has been for a generation the most

imperious one in science, "What is man's place in Nature?" This settles it. He is not in Nature. He belongs to a different category. He is in the supernatural.

This underlying assumption of the Fatherhood of God and the sonship of men is Jesus' starting-point. It comes out with startling distinctness in the two titles by which he described himself, the "Son of man," and the "Son of God." We miss the point when we think of this being true *only* of Him. On the contrary, the burden of His life was that men would not see that it was true of all men. It was because He realized in Himself exhaustively both natures that He felt their identity. It was when He was most intensely conscious of His humanity that He said, "I and my Father are one."

"The man most man works best for man,  
Like God at Nazareth."

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the place where one sees the gospel in action, the son remains a son in all the windings of his tortuous course. He lives among swine, but is not turned into a pig like Ulysses' companions. If the strange women among whom he lived should have borne him children, even those sons of shame would have been the lineal descendants of the father who sat at home, but followed with his eyes the errant son who bore his own flesh and blood. When he returned, it was because he "came to himself." A son he was in his father's house, a son he was in the far country, only a son he

was when he came home again. The double revelation of Jesus is, if one may use the phrases without being misapprehended, the *humanness* of God, and the *divineness* of man.

In the two primary formularies of Christianity this fact stands in the front, and is the ground of entrance to what follows.

In the Lord's Prayer men are taught to make their intrinsic relationship to God the ground of their approach to him. They come to him, not as manikins to their cunning artificer, but as children to their father; —

“Our Father who art in Heaven.”

In the Creed, the essential paternity of God is the first article. The imperious instinct of propagation is characteristic of God as of men. It is not good for God to be alone! From this, creation comes; —

“I believe in God, the Father.”

And now I beg you to notice a few practical issues from this fundamental truth thus briefly stated and defended.

(1.) The interplay of affection between God and men rests upon this fact. I have already called your attention to the fact that only beings of the same nature can hold intellectual commerce. This is more profoundly true of love than it is of knowledge. A man may be fond of his dog or his horse, and the brute may follow him with eyes of mute worship, but intelligent exchange of love between them there is none possible. They are not commensurate. Their natures are not in the same plane. It is as true that



like loves like as it is that "like begets like." This is the significance of that pregnant article in the Creed, "Begotten before all worlds." That is, it is of the essential nature of God to love. But love will only go out to a person. Hence, the Son of man, the "first-born among many brethren," is as old as God. This affection of God for his children is the result of their essential nature, and not of their conduct. Human love is not contingent for its existence upon its being either valued, understood, or returned by its object. The father will love the wayward son, the wife the unworthy husband, undeterred by either indifference, stupidity, or absence. It has its root in their community of nature. The father's or wife's very identity has passed into the son or the husband, and cannot be recalled. But there is a strange notion current that God's good-will for a man is latent until set in motion by some deliberate action on the man's part; that it is only a possibility instead of an actuality wrapping the man always round about; that it is arrested by misbehavior, and may be killed by rejection. This notion seems to me to be in the face of the revelation of Jesus Christ. Its deadly error may be seen by stating it another way. Suppose God to speak thus:—

"I once knew and loved such or such a man. He was My child. I loved him. But he offended Me. He was fractious, coarse, obstinate, stupid. I gave him his warning several times, but he would not heed. I have now cast him off. I have thrown him out of My life. My love for him is dead. He is now, like

many others of My children, 'dreeing his weird,' but it does not disturb Me. He made his bed himself, and he must lie in it. He can never again be son of Mine."

This is Paganism pure and simple.

Christianity, on the other hand, thinks of God as saying: —

"This, My son, is silly, stubborn, selfish. He was impatient of My way of life. He went away, thinking, foolish child, to be out of My sight. I cannot send out My servants to bring him back by violence; for it is his love I want, and that cannot be forced. But I have kept him always in My sight. I wait. His rags, his pains, his hunger, are My burden, but he is My son. When he has exhausted himself he will return, and My sorrow shall be turned into joy."

But at this point let me pause to say, in parenthesis, that candor compels the recognition of the fact that there seems to be in the Gospel itself an intimation, of the possibility of a strange and mysterious kind of human action which results in dehumanizing its subject. Just what it is is not very clear. "Offending one of these little ones," Jesus calls it. It seems to be the action of a man who, being consciously aware of God's affection, turns upon it with hate, breaks himself against it, and loses the semblance of a son. The action arouses the wrath of the Lamb Himself! We will not delay now to speculate upon its issue. Whether it transforms its author into a being of another kind which retains his immortality, or whether it fixes in him a process of degradation which slowly carries him out of his



unhappy being, have been variously held. This much is clear: it is an action which no soul can commit without the deliberate wish and intent to do so.

(2.) Notice in the next place the relation of Jesus Christ to this fact of Divine Humanity. What was He? What did He conceive Himself to be? He thought it necessary to insist that He was a man. Whence did the necessity arise? Could any sane person ever doubt the fact? Would not any competent observer have described Him to be "An adult male specimen of *Homo Sapiens*?" Did He not show flesh, blood, nerves, tissues, hair, beard? Did He not wear clothes, eat food, and warm Himself at the fire?

"Had He not eyes, hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as another man? If one prick Him would He not bleed? If one tickle Him would He not laugh? If one poison Him would He not die?"

Being so palpably man as He was, why should He insist upon the fact? Why call Himself the "Son of man?"

The reason is not far to seek. Being in Himself the ideal man, He found Himself identifying His consciousness with that of God! Not enough, I think, has been made of the psychological proof of Christ's Divinity. He seems to show the double consciousness which belongs of necessity to such a Person.

He says, "I and my Father are one," and again "My Father is greater than I;" and both were alike true. Their harmony is to be sought, not in the unity of any theological system, but in the unique personality of the Divine Man. He carried to their ultimate power the dual spiritual consciousness which belongs to all the sons of men.

"What is man that thou art mindful of him," and "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels," was the complex feeling of David, and of all men who closely question themselves. In Jesus the complexity was resolved. When man comes to himself he becomes aware of God. In St. Paul it wrought a confusion of his own identity. "It is I, yet not I, but Christ that dwelleth in me."

(3.) But over against all this seem to stand the stubborn facts of human life. Look at men; let attention rest upon them until you become deeply impressed with what they are as they actually exist. Stand upon a street corner, and watch the myriad men and women as they hurry past. You see how commonplace they are. There is no divinity apparent in them. At best they are but respectable. But most fall short of the best. They are intent upon money or enjoyment. See the hard, empty, vacant, brutalized faces. They fall below the standard of humanity; why put in the claim of divinity for them?

Then call to mind the teeming myriads of narrow-skulled savages who dwell in the dark places of the earth. Call you these gods? Can you fairly call

them men? So low are they, so little above the beast of the field, some of them only yet struggling up out of their original clay into the semblance of man! Why claim for all these to share the nature of God?

I reply: Christianity does claim for them just that descent, and in this claim is the secret of her triumph.

But it must be borne in mind that they are children in all stages of development. If the womb of time be torn rudely open, its embryotic children will seem monstrosities of course. Even when they are brought to the birth some are deformed and misshapen. But can deformity beat off a mother's love from the offspring in which runs her blood? Will she not nourish it, rear it to symmetry within the limitations which its nature sets, taking for the task all the time and all the means available?

Will moral deformity or mere helplessness beat off the love of God? And who will say through what stretches of time and upon what successive stages God will develop his children "into the measure and the stature of a perfect man"?

One thing Christianity has already made practically evident, that is, that belief in man and belief in God are bound up together. They stand or fall together. The revelation of Jesus Christ the Son of man concerning the intrinsic nature of His brethren has not been forgotten or ineffective. Even a false and unworthy "theology," though it has obscured, has not been able to hide it. It is the motive force which is slowly shaping the fortunes of the race.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God!"



II.

THE ALL-FATHER.



## II.

### THE ALL-FATHER.

John ~~XXV~~. 9.

“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

WHEN the gloomy Teuton, our ancestor, walked or sat under the shadows of the German forest, saw its giant branches torn and whirled by the winds, heard the cruel gray North Sea roaring against the shore, heard the ice cracking in the silent nights of winter, he personified all these agencies and called them Thor the “Thunderer.” God, to him, was hard, resistless, boweless Might!

The Hindoo, dwelling for ages in the midst of tropical luxuriance, where the fecund earth riots in growth, where life is prodigal, where tree and plant, and bird and beast, bring forth so abundantly that their children choke and smother one another, personifies the vital force everywhere at work, and with obscene symbols worships Venus Genetrix.

The Egyptians, after centuries of nature worship and nature study, abandon the problem, and perpetuate their despair in the Sphinx.

And so one may call the roll of all the peoples. There have been none of them who did not “seek after God if haply they might find Him.” They all



did find something. Each saw God in the greatest thing he knew. Men's eyes had slowly to be trained before they could see. God revealed himself to them as fast as they were able to comprehend. But their advance in Divine knowledge was never at a uniform rate of progress. From time to time great strides were made, at each of which men paused, sometimes for ages.

In the Holy Scriptures is contained the record of God's successive manifestations, and of the effect of these manifestations upon the lives and conduct of those to whom they came. "God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake by the prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son."

I wish you to examine with some care the thought of God, as that thought lay in the minds of three typical men. They are representatives of three great stages of religious progress. One is from the Patriarchal, one from the Hebrew, and one from the Christian world. They are Job, Solomon, and Paul. It will be seen that each is truer than the one which went before, and also that each hands on his ideas to his own successor who incorporates them into the substance of his own faith. The deep truth of Jesus' declaration is vindicated, that He "came not to destroy, but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets." It is probable that every Christian runs through in his own experience the antecedent religious history of his race; just as every man, in embryo, passes through the types of the lower forms of animal life. Even when mature, there are still to be found fea-



tures in his body, and habits in his mind, whose function is obscure, but whose history is plain: they are survivals from a forgotten past.

So in the Christianity of to-day, there are still extant the great features impressed upon the race ages and ages ago. Indeed, men often fancy they are living "according to Christ," when, in point of fact, they are dominated by the thought of God which belonged to the patriarchs or to the Hebrew Commonwealth.

(1.) Job, the man of Uz. The drama is an unfolding of the thesis that *God is Justice*. It is the religion of the unfortunate. It is true to the facts of human life. It is not the man who has been stripped bare and lies in ashes who curses God and defies Him. On the contrary, this is the one who cannot afford to lose his faith in equal dealing of the Almighty. If the man who has not yet received his good things abandons his faith in an ultimate fair distribution, he abandons everything. This life he has already lost; by so much the more does he hold fast to the hope that he will receive them in some other.

Job is a great, rich, benign, courteous, Eastern Sheikh. His noble sons and gracious daughters are worthy children of a worthy sire. In the gate of the city he is known as the leading nobleman of the Empire. His wealth is past count. He lives generously, cares for the poor, fears God, and loves righteousness. No nobler or more attractive character is drawn in any literature.

But out of a clear sky the lightning of misfortune

strikes him, blow upon blow. His flocks and herds are swept away. His sons and daughters are dead. His wealth follows. He becomes suspected of secret crime which has called upon him the vengeance of the Almighty. His friends abandon him. He falls sick of a loathsome ailment; Last, and worst of all, the woman's love upon which he had leaned fails him at his need. His wife turns upon him in disgust, and calls him a fool. He has drained the cup of misery to its last drop. No dramatist has ever left a more vivid impression of a man's utter desolation than in this divine poem. But literary form is not the author's object. He proposes the question which so many have tried to answer *Why* does God mete out misery to any man?

His three friends sit down by him, and weary him with the shallow religionism not yet dead. Misfortunes are "judgments," they say. "It is true," they confess, "that in this case the offence has been well concealed. You have figured as an upright man; but God can see through all that. Your attempt to still hide the fault only makes the matter worse. Come, make a clean breast of it. Undo the evil, whatever it may be, and then God will take his corrective hand off you."

They made the common mistake that God pays moral awards in material coin.

But Job holds fast to his own honesty. "I cannot tell why God has done this thing to me. That it is for any grievous sin I deny. Of course I know that I have, like every other man, failed to do the perfect

right ; but I have *no* crime to charge myself with, as you suppose. God does what is right. Even though he slay me I will still hold to that. To let that slip would make existence meaningless, and would leave me, to all practical purposes, mad ! I will wait. Some day my vindicator will appear. I have faith that the right will be shown before I die. But I will not be false to myself, even to please God ! ”

Here the argument ends. The dramatist becomes historian, and records that Job’s judgment concerning God was vindicated by the result. For he recovered from his sickness. His wife came back to him with double love. Other sons as noble, and other daughters more fair than, the lost were given to him. Larger wealth and more exalted honor than before became his fortune. And so the drama ends. It exploits that conception of God which is the comfort of all wretched folk. They cling to the belief that the happiness which they have so far missed is guaranteed to them ultimately by the very nature of God, for “*God is Justice.*”

(2.) Solomon the Magnificent.

The Hebrew king is the type of the fortunate man. His is probably the most conspicuous example of absolute good fortune on record. Try to reproduce him and his times before your imagination. Imagine a man in the vigor of mature manhood. His manly beauty is the wonder of his time. His health is absolute. He is endowed with understanding beyond any other. He is a poet, a man of science, a soldier, a statesman, a philosopher, a king, and in every charac-

ter is pre-eminent. He sets before himself the task to test the possibilities of human life. If it be possible for any man to suck happiness out of it Solomon can. He deliberately makes the experiment with his eyes open, noting the observed facts as he goes. First he tries Philosophy. He has all the sciences at his fingers' ends. The "Systems" are as familiar to him as is his nurse's speech. He learns all there is to know, and declares there is nothing in it. He flings it all away, and tries what can be found of pleasure through the senses. Not the gross gratifications which, everybody knows, defeat themselves, but the well considered pleasures of a philosophic voluptuary. He denied himself nothing, — gorgeous residence, dress, service, music, art, entertainment, the fair mistress whom he adored, and the thousand wives and concubines who adored him; the enthusiastic affection of his people and the admiration of his contemporary kings. Again he declares that there is nothing in it. And he says why. It is because God has ordained certain laws of living which a man can no more escape from than he can from his own shadow. Every attempt to violate or ignore any one of them is quietly but relentlessly met and punished. The wise thing to do is to find out as completely as one can what these laws are, and mind them. If he transgress, either through ignorance or foolhardiness, it is but a word and a blow, — and more often the blow without a word.

"This is the substance of the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments." The final word of Solomon is that "God is Law."



(3.) Paul, "the slave of Jesus Christ."

All will allow that this was an extraordinary man. But, unlike Job and Solomon, the things which made him remarkable are to be looked for not in his surroundings but in himself. There was nothing exceptional in his outward life. He was like ten thousand other men. He was a scholar, a gentleman, a man of comfortable fortune, of position and character, but had nothing about him to attract the attention of even his fellow-townsmen.

But his inner life was most tumultuous. His soul was the arena in which was fought out that struggle between the god and the beast of which every man is compounded. His "Confessions" in the seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans has held the glass up to millions. From this intolerable conflict he found relief through the aid of the Divine Man in whom he saw the significance of life and the nature of God. Then he emerged into the serene content of a son of God. He found the solution of the problem of existence in the truth that "*God is Love.*"

You must see how the domination of one or other of these three notions about God must affect a man's living. In point of fact they are all three actively working to-day.

All about us whole classes of men are in rebellion against the existing conditions of life, and appealing clamorously for a "justice" which they think has been wrongfully denied them. They are poor, and they think their poverty a punishment for an offence

which they have never committed. Why should they live meagrely and stunted while their neighbor, no better man than they, lives in luxury. Lazarus in his rags and sores, like Job on his garbage-heap with his boils, asks God "*Why?*" They misread, or but partially read, the facts of life, as Job did. They fancy that God makes up his balances yearly. If a practical equity of distribution fails to reach them in a lifetime, they conclude that either God or man is at fault. God, they think it cannot be; and so they clamor for a human adjustment which will, by laws and governments, bring in the equity which God's justice warrants, and man's injustice thwarts. I wish it might be done! Surely it is not pleasant to think of pain and poverty as being perennial. Who would not vote for any act of legislature or any economic system which would cure them,—if only it could be? But the whole thought of God and life out of which such dreams come is shallow, mechanical, of the world's childhood. It would settle the perplexities of life by changing conditions instead of by changing characters. If men were automata, if they were beasts, this way would be practicable. But the disturbing element in this mechanical equation is the incalculable quantity of men's wills. These can never be reached, changed, controlled, moved, or restrained by justice. Only to love will they respond.

But not more true, and much less noble, is the cold-hearted acquiescence in "law" which marks the smug, comfortable man of fortune, or man of

science. The one sees in God an infinite policeman, to preserve the established order of things. The sinfulness of crime seems to him to rest in its tendency to disorder. The student finds himself in the presence of a formless, impassive force, which does not hesitate to break up and throw upon the ground a thousand generations of unnoted men that they may form the soil out of which a future generation of better things may grow. I doubt if any more horrible conception of existence will ever be reached than that of the "Reign of Law." In the presence of an infinite justice one may plead and hope. In the presence of law, one will "eat, and drink, and die," — if possible, childless!

The infinite relief which Jesus brings to the situation is this,—one sees in Him the eternally true relation which exists between God and men. They are father and sons. They show the same nature and the same destiny. What derangements exist are in the estranged affections. What is possible is to be sought here. The Christian is the only man who is true to the facts. He only is "scientific." He does "fear God;" but he knows that he cannot "keep His commandments." In sober truth, he is not much concerned about commandments. He asks, not "What am I to do?" but "What am I?" He knows that if he can settle truthfully his eternal relationships his conduct will take care of itself. Keenly and painfully alive as he is to the fact of his "brute inheritance," he is as deeply conscious that he has also descended through another line. This

is the one he tries to re-establish. Slowly, as he does so, he comes into the secret of God. The perplexities of life clear up, and the burdens of it become light. As he comes more and more to know his Father, he comes more and more to recognize and care for his brethren. He would reform the world by leading his brothers, one by one, back to their Father. He comes to see that the most imperious force in the universe is the same one which laughs at all obstacles when it shows itself in the lives of men and women, — that is love. He opens his heart to his Father, and walks serenely.

“ Strong Son of God, immortal love,  
Whom we that have not seen thy face,  
By faith and faith alone embrace,  
Believing where we cannot prove,  
Thou wilt not leave us in the dust.”



III.

THE CHURCH THE BODY OF CHRIST.



### III.

#### THE CHURCH THE BODY OF CHRIST.

Eph. i. 23.

“The Church is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

No one doubts that Jesus intended to be a *permanent* force in the world. It was clearly no temporary ascendancy which He had in mind. His was not the temper of what the Scotch call the “maisterful man.” That sort of men are always in the world. “Born leaders” men call them. They dominate those with whom they come in contact. They seem to have more dynamic potency than their fellows. These go down before the glance of the eye or the tone of voice of such a man.

But these masterful souls are not those whose influence upon the race is permanent. Their effect is intense rather than extensive. Their influence usually ends with their lives. For a little while their names are remembered as prodigies, and then they fade out of memory. Jesus cannot be classed among great leaders. That He was not: He was something more. The work which He proposed to Himself was to be a constant work. It was to be least at its beginning, but to grow through the ages. It was a

"kingdom" to be built up slowly, out of discordant materials, brought from many places at many times, by many hands; but its design was clear in His mind, and shows no trace of misgiving about the issue. He warns His friends in whose hands He placed His working-plans, against impatience and against despair; but He looks for triumph so confidently that He confuses His tenses, and says, "I *have* overcome the world." He deems Himself to be more secure and abiding than the most stable things, and declares that "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." In a word, none can read the Gospels without being struck with the serene confidence of perpetuity which filled His mind.

*Again:* no reader of human history will care to deny that this confidence of His has been in some sense vindicated by the subsequent facts. Who is as well known in the world, at this moment, as Jesus Christ? About whom do men think and speak and read as much as they do about him? Whose life has been so exhaustively studied? Whose words have engaged and held the attention of men in a way at all approaching His? The dominant races of the earth count the years from His coming. They deem that the most important event in history. The one word which groups and unifies the progressive races is "Christendom." In some mysterious way He has constrained history, and bent the current of movement. It is true that other men have done the same, in a measure. But His influence has been so incomparably greater in degree than that of any other, that

a strong presumption is established that it must be different in kind. It differs from that of any man in this, that it constantly increases in potency, while that of theirs constantly diminishes. The influence of a great man upon his race is like a projectile fired from a gun. Its initial velocity is its greatest. The farther it travels the less its energy becomes, until it is spent and falls. The influence of Jesus has moved through the centuries like a missile whose energy is in itself. Its speed and potency have steadily increased. Compare His course with that of John the Baptist. "I must decrease, but He must increase," said the greatest of all the men born of women. He was indeed great, "but the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than He," because in that kingdom inheres a new and greater kind of energy, which every member of it shares.

The effect which He has produced is usually spoken of as done by the "spirit of Christianity." This is in harmony with the language He Himself held. But He spoke of His "Spirit" not as that diffused tendency which we call by such a name, but as a self-conscious, though protean, person. *How* does the spirit of Christianity operate?

I reply, it follows the analogy of all spirit, and operates through and by a body. One cannot conceive of spirit operating any other way. The spirit precedes the body, forms it, and expresses itself by it. Let us draw out this idea more in detail, so as to get it fairly before our minds.

What is a man but a soul which is constantly

clothing itself and expressing itself in matter? Its garment is ever disintegrating and being renewed. Particle after particle falls away, and is replaced by other like particles. The "form" lies under the stream of atoms which flow over it, as the form of the river's bed gives shape to the water above it. The spirit speaks through the body. If the vehicle be sane and vigorous, the message is clear and whole: if it be faulty or marred, the message is incomplete or broken. If the body be broken, the spirit remains silent and flits away.

Examine also such a phrase as, for example, the "spirit of political freedom." There is such a thing. No word so well describes the thing as the word "spirit." It is like the wind; one cannot tell from where it emerges, or to where it vanishes, but it can be clearly seen, sometimes in fitful zephyrs fanning the hot cheek of the slave, and again sweeping like a cyclone amidst the *débris* of empires. But it cannot subsist disembodied. The political history of the last thousand years is simply the record of the attempts of this spirit to clothe itself in form. It emerges from its secret home in the forest, and finds expression in the clumsy folk-laws of the Saxons. It gathers about it slowly the body of the English Constitution. It finds its thus-far fittest expression in American institutions. But the thing to be noticed is, that it has always wrought through and by some organized body. At every stage it has dropped something, and taken on something new. It has constantly re-incarnated itself. Thus the spirit has



always found a body, and the body has always protected the spirit. The spirit of political liberty will not remain for long alive as an inspiration, a memory, or a hope: there must be some place among men where it dwells bodily.

But there is a strange notion current that the spirit of Jesus Christ may subsist indefinitely as a blessed Ghost; indeed, not only that it may do so, but that it must. The idea of organization as being necessary to the life of Christianity is deeply resented by many. The strange paradox exists of great religious organizations whose organizing principle is that organization is of no consequence. Probably the popular notion of Christianity diffused in Protestant communities is this: It thinks of Christianity as a spirit,—a spirit working sensibly in individual souls, a spirit moving in the mass of society. It is jealous of every offer to claim for this spirit an organized body. Such people seriously believe that the less body of organization a spirit can have, the better; that the ideal would be a state of humanity wherein every individual soul would be touched independently by the spirit of Christ. This is not to be wondered at. The notion arose at a time when "Christ's body" was so constricted and paralyzed that it could not speak as the Holy Ghost moved it, but mumbled incoherent or blasphemous words. But then, because the spirit of a man speaks but poorly through a diseased body, shall we say that the spirit of man will manifest itself without a body at all? Or shall we think the same way about the spirit of Christ?

Suppose the first generation of Christians had thus conceived of the Church, what peril and pain they would have been saved ! For, remember, martyrdom came to them in cruel form, not for following Christ's precepts, or for being filled with His spirit, but for *membership in an illicit organization*. Had the early Christians at Antioch or Lyons, or even at Jerusalem, thought of Christianity as many people now do, they would certainly not have acted as they did. Suppose some modern "Evangelist" had been their adviser, what practical form would his advice have taken ? Would he not have been constrained to say then as now, that "Church-membership is not essential to salvation ; the sacraments are not necessary in the sense that he who misses them shall miss of heaven ; the chief and only essential thing is that a man should consciously receive the spirit of Christ into his own spirit, and allow that spirit to bring forth its legitimate fruit of righteousness of life." But suppose the disciples had accepted that to be an adequate statement of the case, their action would certainly have been different from what it was. Why should they have jeopardized their lives and estates to do things which, on the theory of the "Evangelist," were not necessary, and not even of any great consequence ? For, notice, persecution seized upon them, not because they became conspicuous for purity, honesty, charity, gentleness, meekness, goodness. There has never been a society which would have become exasperated at the exhibition of these qualities in individuals as the Roman world did at the



Christians. That anger was aroused by the deliberate attempt to introduce a new and antagonistic kingdom. It was the projection three centuries forward of the same offence which brought Jesus to the cross. The renunciation of His plan of a kingdom would have saved Him at Jerusalem. Abandonment of church-membership would have saved His followers at Rome. They were burned and crucified because "they assembled themselves together." If they had believed it to be lawful, how easy it would have been to pass on from mouth to ear the gracious words of Christ; for individuals to keep His gracious spirit in loving memory, to conform themselves quietly to His precepts without attracting dangerous attention to themselves by organization. And why should they have banded themselves together into a body if membership in a body be not of imperious necessity? And if they had followed that theory, every sane man can see, that Christianity would have been dead and forgotten fifteen hundred years ago!

Here we come to see the ground and reason of Christ's stern exaction that every follower of his must *declare* himself. "Him that will confess me before men I also will confess; him that will deny me before men, before men I also will deny." This clearly demands a voluntary and positive declaration; not simply the negative and inevitable declaration which a Christian makes of himself by his conduct. But why? Why should public confession be demanded of me when it is, in the nature of the case, not essential to my salvation? I reply: the obliga-

tion does not arise out of the need of the confessor, but out of the needs of Christ. If it concerned only myself, I might forego at once the advantages and the duty. But it concerns Christ. This is the means by which he intends to be kept alive in the world. The body to be formed thus out of His individual followers is the place where His spirit is to dwell. Refusal on the part of an individual to take his place in it is treason; and treason in any kingdom is a capital offence.

I think the real difficulty in the minds of many is a different one. They find it difficult to believe that the spirit of Christ either needs a specific body, or that it will, in fact, confine its operations to the members of such a body. They ask, "Is the Church identical with the body of Christ?" The facts of life, which every one can see, make it difficult to assert this. If there were a sharp distinction between the "Church" and the "world," the perplexity would be solved. But there is not. Any definition of the Church which would satisfy even the strongest Churchman, would still leave outside of it a broad margin of individuals who are clearly more or less under the domination of the spirit of Christ. It is urged even, "Why try to maintain the Church idea when the exigencies of life do not require it? Here are a thousand institutions now existent among men which have established their necessity, — law, government, commerce, science, art, learning, — why not try to infuse all these with the spirit of Christ? When that shall be done the problem will be solved. The world will be redeemed.

The spirit will no longer be compelled to brood over chaos, but will sing in an harmonious universe?"

To this I answer: The notion arises out of a confusion in thought. Take, for example, the institution of civil government. It is perfectly true that if every individual citizen were filled and moved by the spirit of Christ, the State would be Christian. But government, law, would be neither more nor less Christian than they were before; for these are things of which not even moral qualities can be predicated. Laws are simply lifeless tools by which living creatures express and execute their wills. No spirit, either good or bad, can dwell in them, any more than the spirit of man can dwell in a manikin of springs and steel. The same is true of every one of the "institutions" named. They are lifeless things. But the "Spirit is life," and can only abide in a body suitable for it. The actual experience of the attempt to bring in the spirit of God by reforming institutions, has not been encouraging. It is amazing that wise and good men and women should look to it as they do. The Church of Jesus Christ has always been the reforming agency of the world. It was meant to be. It was established primarily for that end. It has preserved in the holy place of its temple the standard of moral measurement which the world has always accepted. The things which it has banned, the world has banned; the things which it has loosed, the world has received.

But this fact, that the Church is the body of which Christ is the soul, forces some very serious considera-

tions upon its members. I will ask you to weigh only two of them.

The *first* is, that law of growth by which a principle of life attracts to itself, and uses only such matter as can be assimilated. God giveth to every seed his own body; that is, the body which is able to conserve and express the life of the seed. Every life selects unerringly from the earth's mass such atoms as are fit; the rest it rejects. If by chance a strange one find itself entangled in the organism, it irritates; and if the life be strong enough, it is cast off. So the spirit of Christ moves among the mass of men. It tests them. It selects and rejects. It moves with a fan in its hand. It winnows the human atoms, and builds its heap finally of those who can endure.

The *second* is the awful disaster of schism in the body. Church unity is dismissed by many sober-minded men as an impracticable dream. It may, conceivably, be so; but do they perceive the alternative? It is true that each body hath many members, — eyes, hands, feet, — and that no one can say to another, "I have no need of thee." But do they see that all the members may still remain attached to the body, and yet the body be smitten with an awful disease? There is a dreadful affection of the brain, which produces what the physicians call "loss of co-ordination." It is a pitiable sight. There is no visible lesion; but the owner's two hands or two feet, or hands and feet, refuse to act in concert. Each moves independently of the other. The man is as good as dead. Does this not express the helpless condition

of a divided Christendom? Co-ordination has been lost. The Church can neither run nor speak. She can yet think and pray. Let her pray for unity that she may be kept alive.

The amazing vitality of the spirit which animates it is manifest in the faults and weaknesses of the Church, as in her strength and triumphs. The hope and pledge of her abiding life and vigor are in the changeless soul which dwells within her. For "the Church is His Body; the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."





IV.

JESUS' WORKING THEORY OF LIFE.





## IV.

### JESUS' WORKING THEORY OF LIFE.

Phil. II. 5-9.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name."

THE student of "Comparative Religion" can make very little out of Christianity. It will not yield up its contents to his tests. He tries to place it side by side with the other 'isms, but its personality is so unique that his comparisons are of very little value. The truth is, it is not a "religion" at all. The things which are prominent in other cults are conspicuously absent from it. It concerns itself hardly at all with the origin of man, for example, or with the origin of the universe, or with the mode and manner of future existence. It has little to say of the internal economy of the Godhead. To be sure, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is clearly deducible from it, but it is not formally stated (save in one spurious passage), and does not occupy much space anywhere.

What it essentially is, is a Working Theory of Life. It takes the facts of existence as they involve and concern men, sets them in their true relationships, uncovers their significance, and brings the man who comes to see them truly into a new and hopeful temper. Jesus seems to say to those who heed him something like this : —

“Brothers, listen to me ; every human life is, whether he knows it or not, under the management of a father. It is to be passed among brothers. These are the facts ; and while you may ignore them or mistake them, they are still the facts. Now, if you will recognize these facts, and act accordingly, you will be blessed and you will bless ; if you do not see them, or do not believe them, you will be miserable, of course. In Me you see the Father. Many who look at Me do not see the Father, but you who do see it are let into the secret of existence. You must treat your brothers brotherly. They will not understand you, and will not thank you. So be it. Trust to the facts, and all will come right. Your brother may over-reach you, may curse you, may slay you. Let it be so. You are still the winner. Do not retaliate. If you want to bind him into helplessness, throw around him the meshes of your love. True, he may break out of them and smite you, but even so, not a hair of your head shall be wasted. In the end you will win. One, with God, is a majority.”

He calls attention to Himself as the supreme example of this method. He had renounced the rights and immunities which belonged to Him as God, and

deliberately embraced the career of a man. He followed the career to the end. He claimed no exemptions, not even from temptation, from death, or from hell. He passed through every experience possible to a man, and the whole career was just the parts of the One Great Renunciation!

St. Paul seizes upon this, the central feature of Jesus, and challenges every man to become "of the same mind which was also in Christ." He urges this upon the ground that in the case of Jesus it was magnificently successful. The central spirit of Christianity is then the renunciation of rights. That is, one finds success by renouncing ambition. He finds safety by declining to fight for it. He finds wealth by spending, peace by going about unarmed, life by losing it.

Now, to practical men, all this seems the very extremity of wrong-headedness. It is a set of paradoxes which do well enough for a sermon, but which are really not to be considered in practical conduct. It is an ideal which will do to dream about, but in a world constituted as this one is, it simply "will not work." "Suppose," they say, "a man should really undertake to conduct his life upon this theory, to resist not evil, to sit down patiently under contemptuous usage, to empty out of his life all those laudable ambitions which he has set before himself as aims, what a pusillanimous wretch he would become! He would be thrust to the wall and trampled upon, and would deserve to be, and more than all, he would do harm and not good in the world."

Or, to see its absurdity more clearly, imagine a *corporation*, say a railway company, to adopt this policy. It must not seek its own; it must forget itself, and work for the interest of its rivals; if rates are cut, or a parallel road is built, it must not return evil for evil. What would become of the shareholders of such a road? Would not the courts of a Christian government step in to remove and probably to imprison the managers who should adopt such a policy?

Or, try it on a still more palpable scale, in the case of a *Nation*. Let such a country disband its armies, lay up its arms, beat its spears into ploughshares and its swords into pruning-hooks, and learn the art of war no more. If an enemy seize her territory, let him have it. If she is insulted abroad in the person of a citizen, do not avenge it. Let her burn her bonds and remit her taxes, — and all the rest of it. You see how grotesque it seems to fancy the same mind which was in Christ in a man, a corporation, or a nation. It seems to be not only impracticable, but dangerous. It would seem to imperil some of those *virtues* which men hold in high honor. For, in point of fact, many of our highest ideals emerge from the idea of Rights. The Magna Charta, the Petition of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, — what are all these but the solemn asseveration that men know their rights, and knowing, dare maintain; that they not only will not, but ought not to, renounce them. Out of this springs the high, chivalric ideas which belong to military life, the pomp and circumstance



of glorious war, the instances of bravery and self-devotion which shine out of the stained pages of history. Is it not indeed true that such considerations as these have restrained the mass of men from taking up the cross? It is not so much shrinking from the pain of the cross which deters. That could be borne. But it is the stubborn belief that it would be useless, and a lurking suspicion that it would in the end be hurtful. One could lose his right eye or right hand to win eternal blessedness; but to lose the dear member, and then find that the sacrifice had been thrown away! To maim one's self, and then fail of entrance into life; there's the rub.

Now, I have tried to state the practical and theoretical difficulties in the way of a Christian life without reserve, and as they do actually lie in the minds of many honest men with whom I have talked about these things. I do not think it worth while to say to such men, "Here is a manner of life laid down by Jesus: you must take it on faith; that is, you must shut your eyes to all its probable consequences, and obey like a little child." The fallacy of this exhortation becomes evident as soon as one examines it. Of course this challenge to obedience does not become of obligation upon any individual until such a person is satisfied that it comes from One who has the right to command. But the nature of Him who issues the order is largely to be determined by the nature of the order itself. Some men have satisfied themselves upon this point, and so are the "followers of Christ." Others are trying to satisfy themselves

upon the same point: and they also are followers of Christ, only less far along. I fancy this to be the attitude of thousands. They are strangely attracted by the person and spirit of Jesus; but they hesitate to commit themselves unreservedly to his principle of living on account of its seeming impracticability. Before such, — and are we not all such? — I want to lay a few considerations.

(1.) I ask your candid attention to the *overwhelming successfulness* of Jesus' own career. Who thinks of His life as a failure? as wasted or thrown away? or as lived in such a way as to miss of the best conceivable? Dismissing for the moment all thought of His divinity, was there ever a more successful life than that of Jesus the Nazarene? In its main outlines it is perfectly familiar to more than half the world. They know the poverty, the humiliation, the death, which overtook Him. But they know also that He possessed a serene self-content which made Him invulnerable. They see the strange moral domination which He exercised over all who came at all to understand Him. When we see Him and Pilate standing face to face, — Pilate the self-seeker, who subordinated everything else to his own aggrandizement, and Jesus, who would not so much as open His lips to save His life, — which of the two does one instinctively prefer? Here the two theories of life are violently contrasted. Pilate looks to himself, is alert, adroit, his trained senses and understanding keen to detect danger, and unhesitating either to parry or to strike, as occasion may advise. Jesus

has no thought of Himself at all, but without the smallest tremor commits His destiny to His Father. Look at them closely. Which of them will you point to and say, "Behold a man"? The judgment of the world has been given upon both the man and the principle.

Is it not a strange fact, that in the face of "the practical common sense" of humanity, Jesus, and His faint shadow the Buddha, divide the homage of three-fourths the human race? The great renunciation of Him who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," and the little renunciation of the Indian prince under the bo-tree have touched the heart of Christendom, and the imagination of Heathendom. Can it be that a principle so practically potent does not rest upon eternal verity, or can be unsafe to follow?

(2.) Weigh the experience of men,—that the things most to be desired in life are not attainable when striven for as *rights*. The great joys of living, the real blessings of existence, come not that way. Any one can test it for himself, or observe it in a hundred examples. A man says: "I will act with open eyes and calm judgment. I will not be guided by sentiment. I will look fairly at the situation in which I live, and will care for myself.

' As I walked by myself

I talked to myself,

And thus myself did say to me:

"Look to thyself, and take care of thyself,

For nobody cares for thee."

"I will do justice as far as is in my power; but I will also exact justice from my fellows. I will follow



Polonius' counsel and beware of entrance to a quarrel, but being in, will so bear myself that my enemy shall beware of me. I will owe no man anything, and I will see to it that no man shall owe me anything uncollected."

Now, what will such a man be able to secure for himself? At the very most, he shall dwell in a palace, dress luxuriously, fare sumptuously, and buy such toys as he fancies will amuse him. But the code which he adopts, with what he fancies so much sagacity, will be impotent to secure him the devotion of a woman, the friendship of a man, or the love of a child! No doubt he will actually possess all of these to a degree; but if he look closely he will see that they have all come to him, not because he has adhered to the plan of living which he has announced, but because he has at times broken away from it, and allowed himself to be led by the "mind" of Christ. He may possess some of these, and the like blessings, I say. But again he may not; for it is the peculiarity of this kind of man to think that love may be bought or compelled. Who has not watched the wretchedness of a man, for example, living year after year unloved in the presence of a wife whose heart is filled to bursting with an affection which he cannot touch. He thinks it ought to be his by right. He owns it. He has bought, or he has contracted for, it in an open and fair bargain. But he cannot possess it. He gnaws his own heart in impotent disappointment, because he cannot bring himself to ask as a gift that which he thinks ought to be his as a right.

A tender word of solicitation would open upon himself the very flood-gates of a woman's love ; — but he has learned to live by the rule of rights, and cannot understand the "mind of Christ" which alone can compel the benedictions of life for lack of which he is starving. Indeed, there can be no more patent illustration of the potency of Jesus' rule of living, than the strange place which woman holds in Christendom. They were the first to comprehend Him and to make His spirit theirs. They have always been drawn to Him, as men have not. They have found the strange strength of weakness, the rich life which comes by losing one's life. Pity it is that they should ever be misled to exchange the power of Love, which has the promise of the future, for Right, whose sway is doomed !

(3.) Institutions which rest upon force are short-lived. This is true, though the quality of force may be disguised, even though it masquerade as necessity or even beneficence. Men of violence have tried again and again to seize and control the world's life. They have always failed. They always must, even though the tyranny be that of "the people" instead of the ruler. Governments of might have chased each other like the breakers chasing one another up the beach. Their violence ruins their stability.

Who can think that the armed truce of Europe's mighty empires is stable? "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword" is an eternal law. Each one must, of necessity, add force to force in the titanic rivalry, until the burden of the armor be-

comes crushing. Then it must fight for the opportunity to disarm. When, finally, one stands supreme, overlooking its fallen rivals, its very attitude evokes new enemies, and again begins the horrible cycle. All see that no stable equilibrium of nations can come until force is eliminated, and "sentiment" takes its place. And what is true of nations is true of men. "They must overturn, and overturn, and overturn, till He comes whose right it is to reign." His name is Love.

Just here I fancy some one saying: "Is Tolstoi right, then? or the Quakers? Is non-resistance the way? Shall men and society lay down their arms, and abandon the machinery of government,—for is not government itself but consecrated force?" I answer: They are only half right. Half a truth may be practically, and for a time, worse than a consistent lie. *Passivity* is not the law of Christ, for it is contrary to the nature of life. Life is active, not passive. This is its distinguishing quality. Safety in life is not to be found by standing still. That attitude loses the promises both of this life and the life that is to come. Jesus promised His followers safety and blessedness while they should be actively seeking their fellows,—not otherwise. It is not the Quaker, but the Good Samaritan, who is safe from robbers. The one invites attack; the other disarms it. It is not the cloistered nun, but the Sister of Mercy, who is spared by the plague. It is not he who allows his life to be taken, but he who deliberately loses it, who finds it again.

"But, after all, is it anything more than a religious fancy, which will, of necessity, break down under the test of experiment? Can any man *live* that way?"

I answer: "Thousands have lived that way. Many of them have come to disaster, as we would say; but when we offer them pity or counsel, we are met by a strange smile as of one who knows better than we. Those who have been broken, have not repined, but sung songs. We can see that their pain has made it easier for all who follow.

The difficulty of Jesus' theory of life may be frankly acknowledged. He himself declared it. The way is narrow, and the gate strait. The apostle, with that broad-minded reasonableness which marks the true Christian, only exhorts his friends "as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." But it seems clear to me, at any rate, that the world has now travelled far enough to see the goal toward which the path points. The ideal of life which Jesus brought in has been tacitly accepted as *the* ideal. No man in Christendom is altogether untouched by it. Says Mr. John Fiske: "To many the Sermon on the Mount has been as foolishness and a stumbling-block, and its ethics derided as too good for this world. But through misery that has seemed unendurable, and turmoil that has seemed endless, men have thought on that gracious life and its sublime ideal, and have taken comfort in the sweetly solemn message of Peace on Earth to men of good will."



V.

PERSONAL RELIGION.







## V.

### PERSONAL RELIGION.

Col. II. — 26-27.

“The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations now is made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery . . . which is Christ in you the hope of glory!”

THE word “saint” is used in the New Testament as synonymous with “Christian.” Our popular use of the term is unknown there. We think of a saint as a Christian who has reached such a superlative pitch of holiness that he has become conspicuous. In a large section of the Church there are regular methods of canonizing such a person; that is, of formally admitting him into the roll of the “saints.” St. Paul is always careful to speak of all Christians as saints. He begins by addressing a letter to “the saints which are” in such or such a place; and then passes at once to rebuke them sharply for the very gravest moral faults which, he says, are common among them; and ends by a loving greeting to the same “saints.” Our common antithesis of saint and sinner was unknown to him. To his mind many of the saints were grievous sinners; but they did not, on this account cease to be saints. When he wrote saint

he meant Christian; and when he said Christian he meant saint.

But then, to his way of thinking, a Christian was a very remarkable sort of person. In the text he states briefly what such a person essentially is. He is one to whom the mysteries of God lie open. All ages and generations had stood perplexed in the presence of great mysteries. They are such as the being and nature of God; the significance of existence; the question of a possible immortality; the moral value of actions; the destiny of individuals; the future of the race. The apostle claimed that Jesus Christ was the answer to all these hoary problems; and that there was no other answer. His own relation to Jesus was very peculiar. He had never seen Him except in a vision. Just what the nature of this vision was is not very clear; but it is clear that he did not suppose his knowledge of Him to be due to the vision, for he insists that precisely the same certain knowledge is possible to any man.

Now, I wish to press this, though I know that such insistence may be distasteful.

St. Paul asserts that Christianity is the conscious personal relation of an individual soul to Jesus Christ. It is much beside this. It is a manner of living; membership in a society; the acceptance of a creed; but before these, and after them, and along with them, it is an experience. It is a conscious, overwhelming, personal love for God as God is seen and known in the person of Jesus Christ. Let me recall to your mind a few typical passages of Scrip-

ture which will put this beyond dispute. We will begin with the words of Jesus himself:—

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

“O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me, and I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them.”

Then hear the words of the apostle:—

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?”

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

*Again:* During the whole course of Christendom individuals have borne their testimony to this same religious experience. They have believed in Christ, not so much because such conviction was reasonable,

because it was constrained by the strength of the evidences laid before them, as because they found a witness within their own consciousness which rendered external argument and evidence superfluous. They have had the "witness of the Spirit bearing witness with their spirits that they have passed from death unto life." They have been aware of God directly, just as they have been aware directly of their own lives. This religious experience has not been confined to any one type of man or woman. It does not show itself solely in those who are predisposed to hysterics. Philosophers, mathematicians, students of physical science, soldiers, statesmen, men of affairs, all alike have borne their testimony to it. Take, for example, three men, as unlike one another as it is possible to imagine, unlike in mental habit and training, in manner of education, in situation and character, — Augustine of Hippo, Francis of Sales, and John Wesley of London and Oxford. They lived at different periods with centuries between, in widely removed countries, and in the midst of speech and manners not intelligible to one another, yet the religious experience of the one might stand for that of any of the others, or for that of millions beside. They believed that they "had really come to *know* the Lord Jesus Christ; that in an interview between their souls and their Lord they entered into a relation with Him as real, and as vivid in consciousness, as is any other experience of the affections or the cognition faculties."

Augustine in a shady nook of his mother's garden ;

Francis in his lonely walk along the deserted streets of a plague-stricken city ; Wesley sitting in his study in London and reading a dry commentary, — all passed through a like experience. A Presence encompassed them about, and a voice spoke within their souls which they could not but confess was the same which arrested Saul on his way to Damascus. These men, being accustomed to clear thinking, were able to discriminate in this experience between what was their own, and what affected them from without, as the mass of Christians do not and cannot ; but they expressly repudiated any endowment not equally possible for all men.

This same personal consciousness of Christ finds constant expression in the hymns of Christian devotion. Indeed, it is probably the most distinctive mark of Christian poetry. It is subjective. It does not deal, as does Pagan or Hebrew poetry, with the affairs of man, or the glories of God, but with the emotions which the soul undergoes in the presence of Jesus Christ. In some favorite hymns, with large classes of Christians, this language of love borrows phrases and modes of expression from the most ardent hymns of erotic passion. Indeed, there have been not a few who found the most satisfactory expression for their religious affections in the unbridled sensuality of Solomon's Song ! But however it be expressed, it is probably the common thought about religion, in America at least, that its starting-point and first necessity, in every individual, is a conscious succession of emotions which are stirred by the contact of



the spirit of the man for the first time with the spirit of Jesus Christ.

Now, what shall we, sober-minded Church people, say to all this? We have a deep distrust of emotional religion. An "Experience Meeting" would be the most dreadful place in which we could find ourselves. Few among us are aware of what a large place "experimental religion" holds in the religious world about us; that applicants for admission to the Church are carefully examined upon it. That in public and social meetings the detailing of "experiences" is the staple exercise. That the question of how one *feels* is esteemed of supreme importance above that of how he *does* or how he *thinks*. All this is offensive to us. Its phraseology sounds unreal, and is associated in our minds with unctuous hypocrisy. We are reticent. We could no more bring ourselves to expose to public gaze our religious experience than we could our love experiences. Very rarely, in the confidence of intimate friendship, during a quiet walk in the woods, or sitting of a summer evening by the seashore, we may draw aside a corner of the curtain which hides the soul from vulgar gaze, and allow a friend to see what has passed there. But to insist that the soul should be constantly on exhibition, as is the body or the mind, seems to us monstrous. We would have the sense of being indecently exposed. But then what shall we say to the undeniable fact that religion *is* an experience? The reply is not as easy for us as it is for many.

The non-religious world has an answer ready.



“Oh, yes;” they say, “these emotions which you call religious are common to all men. They always have been. They are but the projection of one’s self into the infinite, so far that one’s identity becomes confused, and he fancies his own voice to be the voice of God. This faculty, which you call religious, is but the feeling of wonder in the presence of surrounding mystery, which has always spoken this way. It produces the medicine-man among the savages, the yogi and the fakir among Orientals, the pythoness among the Greeks, the “seer” among the Hebrews, and the “saint” in Christian times. It is, after all, nothing but a man talking to himself, and imagining his own voice to come from the heavens. It is an experience, to be sure, but all its ingredients are provided by the man himself.”

The Romanist has a reply equally ready. “True,” he says, “these deep soul tragedies are real and always possible. But they are not common. They do not have place in the life of the ordinary Christian. He lives by the simple rule prescribed for him by Holy Church. In his life is little or no self-consciousness. Indeed, the less of it he has the better. But there are always a few to whom God vouchsafes personal speech. These are the saints. They are called to special honor in the Church, and at death go past purgatory immediately into heaven. They are not set before us as examples, because in the very nature of the case, the thing which distinguishes them from others, and produces their peculiar sanctity, is a special and arbitrary revelation of God

himself to them. We may pray to them; we cannot follow them."

The popular notion about the matter is vague, but in substance it thinks of a conscious "Conversion" as the beginning of a Christian life. It has no very clear idea of what it means by the term; but it accepts it all the same, and is inclined to doubt the "vital piety" of any *Protestant* who offers to question or qualify it. It does not object to a Roman Catholic doing so, for it is vaguely aware that in his case he offers a substitute for personal spiritual guidance in the shape of the authority of the Church.

Now, what really is at the bottom of it all? How shall we harmonize the language of Scripture, the phraseology of hymns and biographies, the common speech of the Christian world, with our own reticence and absence of religious self-consciousness? To speak with all candor, we lament our cold heartedness and incapacity to enter into the deep religious feeling which has left itself on record; but at the same time, we are honestly distrustful of emotional religion, because we have seen so often its tendency to relax the moral fibre, and weaken the mental vigor, of those in whom it shows itself most markedly.

In this dilemma, I venture to offer two or three considerations which have brought a measure of relief to myself, and may to some of you.

The first is the impossibility of accuracy in language about the affections. When we read the confessions of a lover, we can never be quite sure what

he means. One person will habitually apply the names of love, hate, disgust, devotion, to the most languid and shallow movements of feeling. Another will only use such terms about the most fiery, turbulent, overwhelming cataclysms of emotion. From the mere reading of the record we can never be at all sure which kind, or rather which intensity of experience, is meant. If you try any affection which you are sure you have felt by the language of the poets or novelists, you will be almost sure to think their expressions exaggerated. Let it be conjugal love, and Alkestis seems impossible; filial love, and Antigone is overstrained; erotic love, and the poets are phrase-spinners, and seem to exaggerate the thing, after the manner of their kind.

Now, the same thing is probably true as to the language of apostles, saints, and psalmists concerning human love for God. "My soul is athirst for God; yea, when shall I come to appear before God;" — "It is I, yet not I, but Christ that dwelleth in me," —

"Jesus, the very thought of thee  
With sweetness fills the breast."

Who among us can honestly adopt any of these phrases as his own? And yet may we not fairly believe that our own love for God is as deep and as real as that of apostle, psalmist, or poet?

Here are two persons who live in the bonds of a deep and strong friendship. One of them is reticent, not self-conscious, never examines or thinks of his affection for his friend, would be disturbed and dis-

tressed at any demonstration of affection, but will stand by him through good report and ill, will share his last dollar with him as a matter of course, will postpone his own advantage to serve his friend. The other is ardent, demonstrative, self-conscious, outspoken. Now, of the two, it is always the latter who writes the record. Is it to be wondered at if the expressions he uses seem too high to describe the friendship which was in the other's heart?

The crystal vessels in which the saints and apostles stored the record of their love for God are too capacious for our smaller store; but ours, though smaller, may be just as true and genuine.

But, after every allowance has been made, it still remains true that this conscious interplay of affection between one's self and God must be present. It is true, or at least it appears to be true, that without it an upright, and in a sense a religious, life may be conducted. But in its absence such a life is wanting both in enthusiasm and in security. An examination of evidences may entirely satisfy the understanding; pictures of the place and manner of reward or penalty may fill the imagination; the struggle after duty may content the conscience; but still something is wanting. There is present "the voice of them who conquer, and the cry of them that are overcome, — but the sound as the sound of singing" is not heard!

But then "*How* shall I come to appear before God?" If God were to call to any one of us, as to Samuel, we would gladly answer, "Speak, Lord, for



thy servant heareth." But which way shall we turn, where shall we go in the daylight or the night, what attitude shall we observe, to catch a divine voice in a world where all is silent to our ears? This, it seems to me, is the very mystery which St. Paul declares that Jesus has laid open. He that hath seen Him hath *seen* the Father! The very core of Christianity is the belief that Jesus is God. Now, what personality is anything like so well known, as clearly imaged in the intelligence, as easily presentable before the thought, as Jesus? In point of fact, we know Him better than we do any other person, living or dead. It is the strange power which belongs to Him that He becomes real and living to every one who steadfastly regards Him. This is the ultimate and always available proof of His Divinity. He realizes Himself in any human soul who learns of him and turns toward him with admiration. As the admiration deepens, the sense of his very reality increases, until in the Christian it takes the form, not of a governing principle, but of an abiding personal friendship. In a few choice natures so happily constituted, it sweeps away their very being, and substitutes for it the very nature of Christ. Their identity becomes confused, and they exclaim, "It is I, yet not I, but Christ that dwelleth in me!"

I know there are some who are unable to hear in all this anything but "words, words, words." It is to them, — "Like a tale told by an idiot, sound and fury, signifying nothing." It is unreasonable.

I would, in all candor, remind such that all human

affections are unreasonable. But they are none the less real. Ask yourself *why* you love your wife, your child, your friend, and you will wait in vain for an answer. There is no reason why. An affection which is able to take an inventory of its contents proves by the very act that it is a sham affection. "Love is blind." This is true of all sorts of love. It does not follow sight; it finds its affinity by instinct. So it is of those in whom Christ has been, or is being, formed, the hope of glory. They are slowly finding God, and establishing abiding relations with him. Sometimes the discovery comes as a spiritual shock, an experience easily isolated from all the rest of one's emotional life. More frequently the Spirit worketh with one's own spirit so insensibly that the presence of a strange visitant is all unsuspected. More frequently still, the process moves by frequent alternations of both methods. But in any and in all ways, the phenomenon is the same splendid and wonderful one.

It is the solution of the mystery of living by the formation within the soul of the Christ which links its possessor to immortality.



VI.

GOD'S LOVE FOR MEN.



## VI.

### GOD'S LOVE FOR MEN.

Eph. III. 14-19.

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith: that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

WHEN the apostle once got fairly before his mind the fact that God feels a deep love for men, he was filled with amazement. It is a fact hard to believe and still harder to realize. Yet it is the starting-point of Christianity. It is the very core of the revelation of Jesus. His declaration that God is Love has changed the temper and life of every man and every community which has come to believe that what He said was true. It has been a thousand times more potent to produce right living than had been the previous belief that God is Power. That is to say, Love is more potent than Law; and this is the essence of the Gospel. It is hard to believe it, for the facts seem to be against it. A ruler or a law can compel a certain course of action in those who come

under them, and can compel it at once, whereas the affection of the ruler may be thrown away upon unworthy subjects, producing no results. Love seems weak unless force will clear the way for it, and hold its object down while love works its will upon him. Nevertheless, Jesus insists that God Himself is so constituted that He can never rest content until He shall have won for Himself the affection of all His creatures. He cannot compel this by force of any sort or in any sphere. Jesus uncovers the love of God for men, and allows it to work. He has serene confidence that in the end it will win an answering affection in every human soul. It may work by very sharp methods; for Love can be cruel to be kind. But, according to Jesus, the object which God sets before Himself is not to break a recalcitrant will, or compel an obedience to his orders, but to draw all men to Himself. This theme is constantly played upon in the New Testament. It is the fact which is constantly appealed to as a motive. Whenever in any case it is accomplished, God's purpose is thought of as having been in that case secured. There may be much still to be desired in the life of a man who "has fallen in love with God," but there is no anxiety about the issue of such a life. A force is at work in it which will ultimately bring all the outlying discords of it into harmony.

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.”

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.”

Now, I have dwelt at some length upon this truth, not because I have been anxious to convince you that it is true, for I have no doubt you all assent to it in the abstract, but because I want it to sink into your minds until it awakens the doubt which always springs up concerning it whenever it becomes fairly grasped. That God loves men is likely to be believed just until one sees what the statement involves, and then it is seriously questioned. I think it well to start these questionings into life in order that we may dispose of them.

(1.) The first cause of difficulty is one's sense of his own insignificance as an individual atom in the universe of existence! That God should have some feeling, on a grand scale, toward humanity as a whole, does not sound unreasonable. But then think how many men there are, and have been, and will be! They are numbered by myriads. When one tries to bring the multitude before his imagination he becomes bewildered. Now, can we seriously think of God having a distinct and separate affection for each? But if this be not the fact, then His “love for men” becomes a mere phrase not worth contend-

ing about. I hesitate to think that God cares for me as an individual, one way or another,—that I am anything more to him than an unnoticed unit in the great whole of things which he rules by fixed laws.

(2.) A still greater difficulty arises out of the fact of human unloveliness. We think of things being loved which are lovable. But men, taking them by and large, are not very lovely. Even among one's own acquaintances, there are only a few who are even interesting, and very few indeed who inspire affection. Then think of the great mass who seem to exist for no special purpose. Stop for a little while on a corner of Chestnut Street of a fair and busy afternoon, and look at the crowds hurrying by. If you watch them steadfastly, they will, after a little, come to seem as automata, creatures driven by a purposeless restlessness. Look at their faces. Most are empty of expression, or else have an eager look which is still more forbidding. You can see that many are vicious, most are stolid. Their lives are narrow, their interests are petty, they awake no interest and provoke no love. This is the invariable impression produced upon one whose duty or office leads him to deal with multitudes. The public official, the clerk in a public office, the salesman in a great store, any one, in short, who comes personally in contact with multitudes of people for a considerable period of time, comes to have a sort of contempt for humanity. He has seen too much of it. Its foibles and petty faults have been before such a per-



son so long that he has ceased to feel kindly. He has discovered the unloveliness of men.

Then call to mind that the humanity with which we are familiar, and which fails to touch our affection, is the best in existence. If you take in as well the millions of narrow-browed, dull, brutal, who toil in mines or hide in cities' slums; the worn-out, but still vicious millions of the Orient; the millions of semi-bestial savages in the Dark Continent and the isles of the sea,—the average of the race falls so unspeakably low that it becomes of the utmost difficulty to conceive of God as even keeping it in mind, much less keeping in his love the individuals who compose it!

(3.) But there is a third difficulty far more formidable still. That is, the fact of human pain. If it be true that God loves his children, why does he leave them to suffer so? This has been the dark mystery of the ages. It has led men to atheism. It has led them to attribute to God the qualities of the Devil. It has driven them in frantic despair to curse God and die. It has led men to grovel before God in the abject attitude of slaves before an Oriental despot. It has led them to throw their children into the flames for Moloch, to propitiate an angry deity by the costliest gifts. It leads many among us to think of a "Law," instead of a Person, at the centre of things, so impassible is it, so indifferent to the cries of human agony.

Now, all these facts of human life St. Paul looks squarely in the face, and yet bursts out in praise of

the goodness and loving kindness of God. *Why* does he do so? What new light has he upon the "painful riddle of life"? Why is his opinion concerning the disposition of God of any more value than that of another man? I ask you, then, to notice that he does not give his dictum as an opinion at all. It is not anything which he has thought out, or discovered, or reached by any method common among men. Jesus had said not long before that any one who "saw" Him would see the Father. There were some who did see Him. Not all who looked at Him, for many looked at Him without seeing or recognizing Him for what He was, but some did. Among these was St. Paul. This sight of God in the face of Jesus Christ had the same effect upon him that it always has upon those who "see Jesus." It changed his estimate of his fellow-men by changing his notion about God. It set all the facts of life with which he was familiar in a new light. They remained the same, but they no longer meant the same. As he learned from his Master what is the real disposition of God toward men, they ceased to be insignificant, contemptible, or hateful. They became pathetic, inspiring, dreadful. As an educated and exclusive Jew, he had thought of the mass as "a people who know not the Law, and are accursed." As a Christian, the same people became so valuable that he was ready to pluck out his eyes for them, and even intimated that he would be ready to lose his own soul for them. This discovery that all men are sons of God is the copious spring out

of which has flowed that unfailing "Enthusiasm of Humanity" which is the mark of Christianity. It is only within Christendom that a man is held to be intrinsically valuable. This valuation is based, not upon what he shows at the moment, but of what he is in his very nature. The thing which strikes most painfully a traveller in a heathen land is the low estimate of human life. The natives may be gentle and kindly as in Japan, wise as in China, acute, subtle, and graceful as in India, but in no case are they shocked as we are by unnecessary waste or loss of human life. Philanthropy is in its origin Christian. It started from the revelation of Jesus Christ, the truth which He was the first to get men really to believe, that God has a personal interest in men; an interest which does not depend upon their character or their accomplishments, but upon their relationship to Himself. It is only so long as Philanthropy is able to maintain connection with this, its base of supplies, that it remains effective. As has been shown a thousand times, whenever a man or a society which attempts charitable work, and which has begun with a distinctly religious motive, but declines from its faith and comes to work upon a humanitarian basis, it loses both its enthusiasm and its effectiveness. This must be so in the nature of the case. Love for men is only possible in the presence of God.

So absolute is the Christian's conviction of God's loving kindness that he ventures to seek for the explanation of human pain in it! This would seem to be the extremity of wrong-headedness. But he does it clearly, —

“My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness.”

Now, no theory of the origin or meaning of pain is altogether satisfactory. But is there any more reasonable one than this? It asserts in effect that the ills which assault men and torture them, or at best, take the zest out of living, are neither meaningless accidents which come from nowhere and for no reason, nor are they the purposeless agonies caused by the crampings of a soulless “Law,” but that they are the smartings from the stripes of a rod laid on reluctantly, but intentionally, by a father. It is quite true that we all see and feel many an ill which we cannot honestly account for on this theory. There are sufferings which do not educate. They teach no lesson to the victim, because they do not leave the victim alive to learn the lesson. Or the lesson is so obscure that its purpose cannot be read. A cyclone sweeps away a man’s fortune and maims



his child, and what fault is it meant to punish, or what lesson to teach? Was it a fault to build upon a fair and inviting prairie? Is the bare fact that there are cyclones in that region a truth worth learning at such a cost? This is all true, and there are a thousand ills which we are not able to place under this "Educational" theory of suffering. But, then, what other theory is there? Of course one can dismiss the problem as insoluble. He may clench his fist like Ajax, and defy the brandished darts of Jove. He may picture existence as a sphinx with expressionless face, with the soft, inviting breast of a woman, and the claws of a wild beast. He may think of a universe compelled by a Law which has no self-consciousness, and which grinds without hate and without ruth. But I say without hesitation that none of these theories of life bring, to me at any rate, the same intellectual relief, to say nothing of moral uplift, as does the Christian doctrine that God is Love, and that He is slowly school-mastering his children into a recognition of their relationship to Him.

St. Paul calls the love of God a mystery. It is so. All the primal, fundamental forces are mysteries. That is to say, they are entities of whose existence no one, to whom they have been revealed, can ever again doubt; but what they are in themselves, and how they work to fulfil their results, no man has ever seen. This is the case, for example, with regard to gravitation. It is a mystery. In fact, it is nothing but a name. But in the sphere of physical things it operates so generally, and its formulas bring so much

intellectual rest, that wherever it is announced it is received by all who are capable of apprehending it at all. In the higher sphere of moral things, Jesus' declaration, that Love rules *de facto* as well as *de jure* solves so many difficulties, and opens so many otherwise closed lines of motion, that the number who accept it as true has steadily increased for centuries. Longfellow set the deep Christian truth to verse: —

“Love is the root of creation ; God's essence; worlds without  
number

Lie in His bosom like children; He made them for this purpose  
only.

Only to love and to be loved again, He breathed forth His spirit  
Into the slumbering dust, and upright standing, it laid its  
Hand on its heart, and felt it was warm with a flame out of  
heaven.”



VII.

THE PERMANENT ELEMENT IN  
CHRISTIANITY.



## VII.

### THE PERMANENT ELEMENT IN CHRISTIANITY.

1 Cor. XIII. 8.

“Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.”

HEAVEN and earth were, in a certain way, nearer to each other during the thirty years of the life of Jesus than they have ever been before or since. In theory it has never been absurd, and is not now, to expect a “sign,” a “miracle,” a “mighty work.” There is no assignable reason why such a thing should not be. All that the most bigoted materialist can say is that “miracles do not happen.” He does not venture to say that they cannot, or will not, or have not. He only asserts that the universe, in so far as he knows it, does not show any such thing. Christians believe in miracles, to some extent, but they believe in something else still more. They are not so credulous as to accept blindly the literal reality of everything in profane or sacred literature which claims to be a supernatural portent. But they find no difficulty in believing that at certain times, and for certain well-defined purposes, there have occurred what the materialist calls “divine incursions.”

That is to say, things have happened to men, and in the presence of men, whose *rationale* is not to be sought for in the natural forces and processes with which either physical or psychological science deals. Such events have not occurred with any regularity, or with anything like even distribution throughout the period of human history. They have occurred when they were needed, or when they served a purpose. An extraordinary cycle of them clustered about the time and place of Jesus Christ. There seemed to have been, if one may put it so, a sort of spiritual excitement throughout the universe which was set up by the Incarnation. The interplay between the seen and the unseen was then most vivid and frequent. It began with the angelic vision to Zacharias in the Temple. The Annunciation, the song of the heavenly choirs, the communication to the Magi, the vocal heavens and the resonant earth at the Birth, the unnumbered signs and wonders which attended upon the words and steps of Jesus, the rocking of the earth, and dimming of the sun's light, and the flitting about of ghostly phantoms at the Crucifixion, all these were in the *entourage* of the Divine Man.

Gradually the spiritual disturbance subsided. It had swept through the universe as an electric storm illuminates the northern sky, deflects the normal currents of earth, and sinks again into wonted equilibrium.

But the first generation of Christians, who had lived in a time when, if one may say so, the supernatural was natural, were most reluctant to believe

that it should cease, and that men and things should resume again their life under the natural order of things. They had had, for a time, that fine spiritual exaltation which enables one to pierce the future, and become a seer. They had prophesied. The limitations of past and future had fallen away from them for a little, and they had seen things to come as already present. Their defects in learning and language had been, for a little, supplemented by a strange "gift of tongues." When they found these to be less and less frequently to be depended upon, they were sorely disturbed. It seemed then as though the old work-a-day world was sucking them in again, that the reign of spiritual things was dying away. St. Paul pointed out to them that this was inevitable. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease." The Church was slow to believe him. In point of fact, it never has believed him. In the record, "ecclesiastical miracles" follow hard upon apostolic times. They sprung from the deep craving for immediate spiritual vision. Just in proportion as the Church fell away from its spiritual fervor and early moral insight, these grotesque and frequently repulsive signs came to be more and more readily accepted. The belief still survives. The blood of St. Januarius still liquefies; the withered mummy of San Spiro is still carried about the streets of Corfu, while the faithful recount to one another the story of his miracles upon the mules; the stigmata of St. Francis are still defended by appeals to apocryphal science; pilgrims

still flock to Lourdes and Knock, and the sick are carried by hundreds for cure by a Swiss monk at Pittsburg. The misapprehension is deep-rooted and widespread. Even so sagacious a thinker as Dr. Bushnell felt bound, in the interest of an indefensible theory, to vindicate nineteenth century miracles.

It need not be asserted that such things have passed away for always. Humanity, moving in its orbit, may again cut into the orbit of supernatural verities at a point where they may become visible and frequent. Just as at regularly irregular intervals of years the earth passes through the orbit of the meteoric bodies at a point where they are abundant, and at such times there are showers of "falling stars" in the earth's atmosphere, so the path of Humanity's moral movement has led through places where heavenly phenomena were abundant. Conceivably it may do so again. But the Church has been slow to learn that her Master has committed her fortunes to the forces which are regular and constant. No sign will be shown to a wicked and adulterous generation, no fire from heaven can be called down upon a recalcitrant village, and no mighty work may be forthcoming to convince the unbeliever, or to make the way easy for the discouraged saint. This method had its place, and filled it, whereupon it ceased, vanished, passed away, according to the apostle's word.

But when it passed away another unrealizable hope took its place, and has survived even until now, when it also shows signs of ceasing. That is



“knowledge.” Immediately after apostolic times the Church set about the necessary task of formulating its doctrine. It made the deliberate attempt to state the Gospel of Jesus Christ in formal propositions. It constructed its Creeds. It did not invent the substance of the Creeds, of course. But at Nice, and Cæsarea, and Constantinople, it determined upon the formal statements of the truths of the Gospel. The purpose was to state the truth of Christianity in clearly intelligible and logically defensible terms. It was not meant that there should be any further room for ignorance. It was believed that an exhaustive knowledge of divine things was possible, and ought to be attained as soon as might be. This knowledge was added to from time to time. It descended more and more into detail. The Church passed through the scholastic ages, during which every bundle of Christian grain was threshed and winnowed. The “Fathers” stated and defended the truth in countless volumes. The Schoolmen raised and laid every conceivable and inconceivable objection. The Councils of the Reformation period drew out the intellectual contents of Christianity in the minutest detail. They set them forth in the Thirty-nine Articles, in the Westminster Confession, the Decrees of Trent and Dort and Augsburg. They were unmindful of St. Paul’s explicit declaration, that “whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away;” literally, it shall be “transitory.” In our own generation the apostle’s declaration is evidently becoming vindicated, and to the great disturbance and

apprehension of many devout men. That this is true is evident, I think, to any one who will open his eyes and look. The exact "knowledge," that is, the logical statements and arguments from Christ's Gospel, in which men have rested as a finality, are dropping out of sight on every hand. Doctrines, confessions, formularies, which were once, and not so long ago either, deemed to be so true that they were worth going to the stake for, are dropping out of sight on every hand. How many of you have ever carefully read the Articles of Religion in the Prayer Book? How many of you would be willing to have the Athanasian Creed restored to our Prayer Book, from which it was dropped a century ago? The revision of its Confession of Faith has been deliberately pronounced to be necessary by one of the greatest and clearest-minded of American churches. Doctrines which once passed for knowledge have come to be seen for ignorance. The literal inspiration of the Scriptures, the creation of the world in six natural days, the Miltonic conception of the "Fall," the expiatory theory of the Atonement, and such as these, are items in the knowledge which St. Paul warned the Church were to be transitory.

But what then? What abides? And can it be secure of abiding if these things and the like pass away? These are the questions which many ask with earnestness, and some with terror.

I answer in the apostle's words, "*Charity* never faileth." And I know very well the sense of unsatisfiedness which the answer leaves in many minds.

They say, "Your words would seem to imply that miracles and doctrines are of no account; that the Church has always been mistaken about these things. You abandon all effort to defend them, and resolve Christianity into a sentiment. So long as you give us good and wonderful miracles to satisfy our faith, and clearly stated doctrines to satisfy our understandings, we have something to go upon. We know then where we are. We can meet and wage war with the adversaries. We know where we stand. But you take these things away, and our religion is gone."

I reply, that I do not take these things away at all. I have tried to state what I believe to be the facts of the past and the present. I do not create either the past facts or the present situation. I simply say that it is best for us to look the facts in the face, and I assert that when we do so we find that they have happened as Jesus and his apostles said they would happen. What has happened to the Church is what always happens to a living creature. Its life does not depend upon its body; its body depends upon its life. As an individual, your body was and is shaped by your living soul. That it was which determined originally that the atoms of matter which form your body should take the shape of a man, and not of some other animal. A beast's life gathers to itself the thews and claws, and fur or feathers, of a beast. The plant life gathers to itself matter, and moulds it into the shape of a tree or flower. God giveth to every seed a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed

his own body. The Christ life gathers about it and gives shape to the body of Christ on earth, even the Church. But I ask you to notice well, it is not the Church which keeps Christianity alive; it is the spirit of Christ which keeps the Church alive. This spirit gathers to itself individual atoms, it reshapes and transforms them as individuals, it builds them together into a society, it develops in the society the faculty of speech, it speaks by a thousand tongues, to every man "in the tongue wherein he was born." The theology, the organization, of the Church is then but the body which is created by its essential spirit. Her customs and methods are but the clothes which that body wears, and which change with the fashion of the times. Or, to leave metaphor and speak explicitly, the Church is not built up around a set of miraculous facts, nor around a set of theological doctrines: it is built up around the spirit which was in Jesus, which spirit was Love. Its central, vital principle is "Charity." This is immortal. It preceded the Church in point of time, and will survive it; but it has in this dispensation a close and necessary relation to it.

The burden of Jesus' message is, that God loves men, and therefore they ought also to love one another. They ought to do so. But, as he clearly recognizes, such affection is neither common nor easy. He set about to produce it. In his first public address, he asserted in the most uncompromising way that men must come into this temper. They must love, not their friends only,—anybody, even the Publicans,



could do that, — but their enemies also. They must be alert, not only to return courtesy for courtesy, — anybody could do that, — but return good for evil. They must not be put out if asked to go a mile to show a stranger the way, but must volunteer another mile for Love's sake. He declares that the future and final classification of men will hinge upon the possession or absence of this temper. He who possesses it to the smallest degree, even enough to induce him to give a cup of cold water for human love's sake, shows that he has the spark of Divine Life in him; he who fails utterly here is dead, and condemned already. Before his departure he ordains his Holy Sacrament to be for all time both a perpetual pledge and reminder, and also a constant producer of charity. The Holy Communion is the sacrament of love. It takes the act of brotherly communion which is the expression of affection, and labels it Holy. No better exemplification of my thesis can be found than this sacrament. Many have been in the way of thinking that the true nature of the Holy Eucharist is to be safeguarded by calling attention to the supernatural quality which inheres in it because of Christ's presence there. Or that it is only safe and permanent when the Church holds and teaches with authority correct notions as to its nature. Both these seem to me to strangely miss the mark. The stress which has been laid upon these has only availed to produce the monstrous result, that the sacrament which was meant to be the very bond of peace, the sign and pledge of Christian love, has been the bone

of contention around which has been carried on the theological wranglings of centuries. Christendom is broken in two over the Mass! Men have persisted in seeing in it a sign, when they had the apostle's word that signs shall fail; they have sought to identify it with a knowledge, when he had declared that knowledge vanisheth away, and have missed in it the charity which never faileth.

The Christian Church is organized around an emotion; to speak more accurately, it is organized around a principle of life. This principle is Love. As men come to realize what their true relation is to God and their fellows, they come to realize their kinship with God, for God is Love. It is out of these new created souls that the Church springs. It is Charity, which is the constant force, that keeps the organized body together. It keeps the doctrine sound and the practice reasonable. The formula, "the faith delivered to the saints," is far more profoundly true than most of those who have it so frequently on their lips ever dream. It is always true. It is only to the saints that the faith can be delivered. For "faith" is a moral and not an intellectual thing. It is only the "saints" — that, is those who possess the charity of Christ — who can receive it. The truth of Christ has been obscured for ages by the pre-eminence which has been given to miracle and dogma. But let us be candid, and confess that it is hard to see how it could have been otherwise. The cluster of miracles which attended upon its foundation were so striking that they strongly arrested the atten-



tion of the ages. The systematic theology has been but the inevitable attempt to manifest the life of the innermost soul in terms of the understanding. These have been the hard, strong, and sometimes repellent, husk and shell which conserved for the time the life of the kernel. But now, on every hand, these are yielding to the gentle solicitations of the recurring seasons, they are opening and falling away, to allow the priceless seed of Christian charity to sink into the soil of human society, that it may bud and bloom, and bear fruit. The promise of the harvest is on every side. The growing gentleness of manners, the decadence of doctrinal hardness, the multiplication of agencies of charity, both within the Church and without, the eager attention given to the bitter cry of the outcast, the feverish anxiety to provide a place for the weak and helpless at the banquet of life, — all these are the first fruits of the abundant harvest already ripening, which springs from that seed of charity which never faileth.



VIII.

JESUS' ESTIMATE OF HUMAN VALUE.



## VIII.

### JESUS' ESTIMATE OF HUMAN VALUE.

Matt. XXIII. — 12.

“How much is a man better than a sheep?”

ONE Sabbath day a man with a withered hand came to our Lord and asked to be healed. The Pharisaic precisians, who were standing by, interposed an objection. They said the man ought to wait till the next day. To cure him then and there would be a violation of the regulations concerning the Sabbath day. It is not necessary to suppose that their objection was either captious or dishonest. It would not lay any special hardship upon the man to wait, and it was of importance that the sanctity of the Sabbath should be maintained. It was an institution whose practical use had been vindicated by centuries of experience. But it was an institution which could only be sustained by ceaseless vigilance. There was always somebody ready to encroach upon it in the interest of his own personal advantage. But if exception was allowed in one case, not clearly of overwhelming necessity, then another would ask the same favor, and another, and another, and the Sabbath rest, which was such a social and national blessing, would be lost. For this reason surgery, and most of medicine, were un-

lawful on that day. It is not very easy for us to realize that to their way of thinking the cure which it was proposed that Jesus should perform had in it no element of religion. It was quite a matter of course that a great *Hakim* should perform such a cure, but then the *Hakim* was no more exempt from Sabbath-day restrictions than was another man. And Jesus did not question the soundness of their premises, but He showed them in three sentences that their conclusion was wrong.

“What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day will he not lay hold on it and lift it out?”

That would be a breach of regulations also; but then it was clearly justifiable by an appeal to that conviction which has always been powerful in the Jew, the sacredness of property. They would unhesitatingly rescue a sheep on the Sabbath, not because the sheep was suffering, but because it was worth money. They would not have understood Him if He had appealed to their pity, either for a sheep or a man, but He appealed to their commercial instinct, “How much is a man better than a sheep?” If the law of the Sabbath can be set aside to save a sheep because it is too valuable to be lost, what may not be done in the interest of a man by one who is alive to his intrinsic value? In this case His argument was trifling because He was dealing with trifling people, and may it not have had something of pleasantry in it? But it is of a piece with His whole way of thinking of humanity.



According to Him, this is God's way of feeling about men. They are too valuable to be lost. He came "to seek and to save" them, because to His judgment they were intrinsically worth saving. The price which He paid shows how He, at any rate, estimated them. There is a homely old proverb to the effect that "the worst use you can put a man to is to hang him." It sometimes must be done, but it is a waste which is incurred reluctantly. To damn him would be a still worse use. This also may be necessary; but we may be sure that it will be done still more reluctantly.

Now, I wish you seriously to consider the question, whether this exalted estimate of the value of humanity which Jesus entertained is a correct one? That He really did hold it I shall try to show after a little, but at present I only ask you to consider the valuation itself.

Whether it be correct or not, it is contrary to the opinion unhesitatingly expressed by very many whom men have accounted wise. Mr. Carlyle once took occasion to speak of the population of England as "thirty millions, mostly fools." There is no reason to doubt that this contemptuous estimate expressed his real thought. Horace had said the same thing centuries before him, and Cæsar had endorsed it. The Pharisees held the same view, and the philosophers agreed with them to a man. But, what is most significant to us, the religious world has, in large measure, taken the same view. Even David, who discerned that man was set in a place not far below

the angels, failed to comprehend the real force of the fact, and asks in impatience, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him? Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow that passeth away." This estimate of the poet king, and that of his splendid son, passed into the thought of the Jews, and probably remains there until this day. Jesus was utterly free from it, though there are traces of their hereditary notions upon this subject in the words of some of the New Testament writers. But in the Western Christendom in which we live, the great Augustine's mean and false estimate of man holds almost universal sway. He was the great theological system-builder of the Western Church. His theology has been dominant for more than fourteen hundred years. He had been reared a pagan. He was a philosopher, a scholar, a man of affairs, and lived in debauchery until nearly middle life. When he became a Christian he pursued his new profession with the same fierce eagerness that had marked his old studies and his old dissipations. But he brought with him into Christianity the same low estimate of man's worth which marked the shallow, cruel, despairing paganism of decadent Rome. This dark view of human character was intensified by the unflinching examination which he made of himself. When he looked within, he saw a personality beneath contempt. He mistakenly assumed that that represented the average man. But his genius and his sanctity availed to carry his doctrine of "total depravity" throughout

the Western Church, and bound it upon the minds of men for centuries to come. In the Middle Ages he was the master, and the Roman Church still accepts his theology. Luther, an Augustinian monk, brought it into the theology of the Germanic Reformation. Calvin, in his Institutes, expounded the same theology, and fastened it upon the French, and Scotch, and American world. There are traces of it in our Prayer Book, and our Articles adopted it, without question, as a part of the common thought of the time when they were formulated. It is now the thought about man which is popularly accepted as "orthodox." It speaks of man in terms of contempt. It fancies that by exaggerating his degradation and unworthiness it so far exalts the goodness, and mercy, and compassion of God. The more contemptible the thing saved can be made out to be, the more glorious will be the Saviour and the salvation.

It has come about also in our time that physical science has joined forces with orthodox theology to vilify human nature. If David thought meanly of man, whom he saw to be, on his spiritual side, "little lower than the angels," what must a generation think which has found him to be, on his physical side, little higher than the ape? We have all come to believe that this is substantially true. We have traced the history of the race away beyond that portion of its course with which Scripture is concerned. We trace the path back to Eden, cross the Garden, and pass out at the other side, following the trail to the primeval caves in which prehuman brutes

snarled, and gnawed their bones. We have watched through the ages the heavings of the sea of humanity. We have seen individuals, now and again, thrown high up on the shore of some new achievement in morals or knowledge, and have seen their descendants hold the vantage gained. But the temper of our science is to think meanly of the great, uncounted, unthinking, unfeeling mass. It expects and hopes of them little more than that they shall be the soil out of which better things shall grow "with the passing of the suns." The last word of physical science, and the last word of Calvinistic theology concerning man, is the same: he is "vile earth"!

Now, set over against this Jesus' estimate of human nature. As a starting-point, consider the title by which He commonly described Himself, — the "Son of man." He seemed always solicitous that there should be no mistake about what He was. He was a man. Whatever humanity might be, that, He wanted it understood, He was. He asked no exemptions. He identified Himself with men absolutely. He was not God masquerading. He was a man, and therefore a son of God. All His thought of His work for men is colored by this belief in the intrinsic value of man. In that great trilogy of parables from which Christianity shines out, this is conspicuous, — the lost coin, the lost sheep, the lost man. A woman loses a coin. It rolls away into obscurity and darkness; it becomes overlaid with dust and rubbish; it is lost to circulation and to its owner's use: but the Divine mistress never conceives of it as being anything but



precious metal, wherever it may be. Being lost, it is not transmuted to sordid iron or worthless clay. She searches diligently until she finds it, because she does believe it to be always valuable. When she finds it, dimmed with dust and covered with rust, it needs only to be cleansed, not recast. The image and superscription of the great King is upon it, and always has been.

A man loses a silly sheep, who strays from the flock into the desert. It runs hither and yon, and loses all sense of direction. It keeps itself alive on brackish water and desert scrub; it is torn by brambles, and hunted by wolves; but it remains a sheep. It is not transformed into a goat, much less into a jackal. The Divine Shepherd seeks it, because he knows it is of value. His motive is double: He pities its pain, and he cannot afford to lose it or its fleece. He leaves the ninety and nine, and traverses the desert till he finds it, and brings it home rejoicing.

A man loses his son. The lad, from wantonness and a boy's unbridled thought of liberty, wanders into a far country. He squanders his life among harlots and swine. But no Circe transforms him into a pig. His Divine Father's blood is in his veins all the while, and his Father's love follows him through all his wanderings. Wanting him, the Father's content cannot be complete. When he "comes to himself," not when he is transformed into something else, he turns his face toward his Father's house.

Could Augustine or Calvin have written these parables? No: they spring from Jesus' profound estimate of the value of man.

His practice was like His theory. He associated habitually with the "common people." This phrase is persistently misapprehended. A sharp distinction is drawn in our minds between the rich, cultivated, educated class on the one hand, and the poor, squalid, and vicious class on the other; and we think of these last as being the common people. This misses the meaning. Common people are *average* people. Those contemporaries of Jesus who were for any reason withdrawn from the common mass of humanity were withdrawn from Him. There always are such people. The possession of exceptional wealth will isolate a man. A certain kind of advanced education will do it. A feeling of religious exclusiveness will do it. So also will exceptional immorality, or confirmed, deliberate wrong-doing. Jesus associated with none of these. He could not do so without separating Himself from the mass of average humanity, — the "common people." Neither riches nor poverty shut Him out, so long as their possessors remained in touch with their kind. It was only when Dives shut his gate, and sat down, flower-garlanded, to a banquet with a few boon companions, that Jesus could not enter. But He dined again and again at rich men's houses, He had the *entrée* of a rich man's garden, and a rich girl who could afford to break a costly chate-laine of alabaster above his head, was his chosen friend. Only those who withdrew themselves from



their kind, shut themselves off from Him. He was concerned with men, and wherever humanity was left He was interested. He fraternized with the poor, for in them He saw humanity stripped to its lowest terms. He ate and drank with sinners, for in them He found humanity stripped still more bare, unclothed with either goods or character. The common people heard Him gladly, because they recognized Him as one of themselves.

“The man most men works best for man,  
Like God at Nazareth.”

I am quite alive to the objection which some urge to this whole way of thinking and speaking. They allege that it leaves out of sight, and indeed tends to obscure, the distinction between the “saved” and the “lost,” between the regenerate and the unregenerate, between the natural man and the spiritual man. They will allow what I have said, with some qualifications, to apply to the saints; but they assert that other men absolutely, and even the saints naturally, are “as nothing, and worse than nothing, in the sight of God.”

This objection may, as it seems to me, be fairly answered in two ways. In the first place, it would be sufficient to say that what I have tried to set forth is clearly the teaching of Jesus; and then leave to them to harmonize it with other truth in whatever way they see fit.

But, beside that, it seems to me that the objection arises from a misconception of the facts of the situa-

tion, and a misapprehension of the Holy Scriptures. The distinction of natural and spiritual man is indeed present in the Scriptures. But it is a classification which does not run between men, but through them; that is to say, the same persons are at the same time both natural and spiritual. It is not the truth that some men are gods, and some are beasts; but it is true that every man is compounded of God and brute. Salvation is the process of eradicating the brute, and extending the dominion of the divine part over the whole nature.

The supreme work of Jesus has been, and is, to bring men into a hopeful temper. He does this by showing them what they are. This is what is needed practically. Men are deterred from entering upon the task of personal redemption from the bonds of sin by an antecedent despair. Their brute inheritance is so clamorous that they have forgotten that they are also gods. The great value of the Incarnation is the proof which it affords that God can in very deed dwell in human form. Wherever the great fact of the Incarnation has been received, man's consciousness of his own dignity has revived. His sense of kinship with God has asserted itself. The creature discovers that he was not made subject to vanity willingly, but by reason of Him who hath been under that subjection in hope. He begins, in this hope, to strive for deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God! In the presence of Jesus, men slowly discover that they are not worthless, and that they are not hopeless.

If my hope of salvation lay only in my contemptible craving for God's pity, I should despair in advance. But since I learn that God needs me as well as I him, I rest serenely in the certainty that God will, unless I hinder him, accomplish his own purpose.

Jesus appeals with confidence to that instinct of men which has always responded whenever they have been induced to heed Him. He, and He alone, has found the long-closed door to men's innermost soul ; and such have found Him to be the very door through which they pass to God.

"He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth ; and the sheep hear his voice : and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him : for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him ; for they know not the voice of strangers. Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers : but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy : I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly. I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming,

and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine."

IX.

GOD'S LOVE THE MOTIVE IN  
REDEMPTION.





## IX.

### GOD'S LOVE THE MOTIVE IN REDEMPTION.

Matt. XX. 14.

"Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him."

John XV. 9.

"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

THE Incarnation is often thought of as an abstract theological dogma. All words which end in "tion" produce this effect upon the average mind. It is the termination which in English denotes abstraction, as "ness" does concreteness. Abstract propositions are most valuable; but they belong in a region where practical minds do not habitually move, or feel at home. People generally are not fond of doctrine. They regard it as the perquisite of specialists. They usually hold in high honor those men who are at home in it, but they wait themselves until the doctors have done with abstractions and bring out the practical results. The doctrine of the Incarnation has been specially unfortunate in this regard. It involves of necessity the most transcendental of all possible ideas. It has to do with the essential nature of God, with the constitution of the human soul, with metaphysics, logic, and philosophy. On this account it has been the theme of endless discussion and controversy. The every-day man is repelled by the very

term, and is not very clear in his mind just what is meant by it.

But, nevertheless, it is the central truth of Christianity. The question, What is a Christian? cannot be answered without taking account of it. The religious motives and hopes of Christendom flow from it. And although it is true that hardly any can be altogether clear as to what the term denotes, even for himself, still nearly every one has a general notion of what it means. It is with this general idea alone that I intend to deal now. The simplest form of statement that I can think of is something like this: We believe that God has manifested Himself in the person of the man Jesus Christ. This is Jesus' own way of putting it. He asserts that any one who has seen Him has seen God. He asserts in various ways that He Himself is God, in the world upon an errand of mercy. By watching Him closely, therefore, we come to see what God's disposition, temper, way of thinking about men and dealing with them, really is. When one, then, thinks of Jesus as being really an incarnation of God, He becomes at once of the most absorbing interest; for, when all is said, people would rather know about God than about any other thing in the universe. It is quite true that they very often show great lack of interest in religious questions and teachers, as compared with secular things and living men. But this is not because they are really not interested in the questions, but because they either do not believe that any answer to them is possible, or do not believe that the particular teacher who asks a

hearing knows what the answer is. I think it is within the truth to say that ninety-nine men out of every hundred have a religion. There is a religious side to every man's life and nature. The religious faculty is as universal as is the faculty of reason or taste. It satisfies, or tries to satisfy, itself in a thousand ways. The savages' superstitions, the pagans' strange ceremonials of sacrifice and lustration, are but expressions of it. St. Paul declares that in every nation there have been those who have "felt after God, if haply they might find him." Among us it shows itself in many and strange ways. In one it is only a vague, formless apprehension; in another it is a constant, or a frequently recurring, self-disgust. In another the faculty seems to be extinct, but is found to be only quiescent until it is momentarily startled into consciousness by a sudden terror or blow in the presence of which a man involuntarily calls out: "Oh, my God!" In yet another it takes the form of an arbitrary and eclectic code of personal morals, which he has slowly formulated for himself. There is something which he will not allow himself to do, even though he might gain by it. Every man keeps a virtue by him. In some little corner of his life there is a little place fenced off from himself; that is his forbidden fruit, and he is generally steadfast in his determination not to eat of it. Another great company, containing many whom we love to call our personal friends, show their religion by their high morality. They accept the code of ethics which obtains in the time and place where they have chanced

to be born, and steadfastly regulate their lives thereby. This is their religion.

Now, we are in the habit of assuming that the Christian is in some way better off than the best of these. We assume that he has been, to some extent, let into the secret of God's will and purpose; that while others know about God, he knows Him directly; that while others are feeling after God, he has found Him. Is this true?

It is perfectly clear, that if it be true, it is a most astounding truth. Its practical importance cannot be over-estimated. If we could only see God, it would be an unspeakable relief, both to our moral and our intellectual natures. In the matter of right living, what would it not do for us? I think the most pathetic sight in the world is the spectacle of men and women struggling on year after year after righteousness, without knowing why they do so, or whether their struggle will bring them to any real goal. I have known hundreds of such. They have struggled against the current of temptation within and without, from a dumb instinct. In some cases they are swept away despite their sturdy strokes. In some cases they seem after a time to become morally exhausted, and sink. Others, again, go out of sight still swimming. But the pitiful thing is, that in no such case do they see the significance of their moral struggle or what is involved in it. What a stay and stimulus to them it would be to see God! The Incarnation is the truth which they miss. It is the answer, and the only answer thus far, to some of



the most constant and imperious needs of men. The practical need is for a mediator between men and God — a *tertium quid* which will bring them into union. The truth is, that, apart from the Incarnation, the very word God is only an abstraction. It is doubtful whether any but the Christian is intellectually justifiable in ascribing to God the qualities which men do so glibly. Is He good? Setting Jesus aside, the answer is at least doubtful! One can only hope so. But under the pressure of pain, and in the presence of "Nature's immoralities," one must doubt of it. Judging existence by what we can see of it, and without any revelation of whence it proceeds and whither it tends, one must remain doubtful of whether it is presided over by a good genius or a malevolent sprite, or whether it has any plan or purpose whatever. Nor do the observable facts of life yield up any clear answer to the question of the endurance of a human soul. There are some things which intimate immortality, but then there are just as many and as cogent considerations which point the opposite way. Indeed, the "God" who is constructed by human reason out of the only material available, is a being powerless to engage a human affection, or, indeed, to awaken anything but the most languid interest. In point of fact, He does not do anything more than this. Did you ever know a man who cared nothing for the person of Jesus who had any real, vivid, personal interest in God? I never did.

The truth is, that if one will take the trouble to

trace up the various complex notions, which, in their combination, compose the accepted idea of God, he will find that they have proceeded from Jesus Christ. Men have looked at Him and seen the Father.

They have seen a father. This is the characteristic of the conception of God which comes from Jesus. It forms itself not around the idea of greatness, or majesty, or mystery, but love. It thinks of God as a parent who has transmitted part of his own life to his numerous offspring. These children are scattered far and wide. Some are silly babes, and some are wayward sons. They have wandered far from their father's house, and for the most part have forgotten all about him. Myriads of them are living in poverty and pain. They have used up long ago the little portion of goods which fell to each one's share when they left their father's house, and to make it good they have been for many a century plundering and over-reaching one another. The weak and helpless ones are robbed, while the lusty and smart pile up heaps of treasure. From the whole mass a confused cry comes up to heaven.

It is to this situation that the idea of "Salvation" addresses itself. But look closely at just what is this thing we call salvation. It is a movement, not of men toward God, but of God toward men. He comes to *seek* and to save. This is the element which has given such a tenacious vitality to Jesus' plan. He roots the process of salvation in the nature of God. We might do without God, but He cannot do without us. This is the fact which gave Jesus



such assured confidence of ultimate success. He was working with God.

Let us open this thought a little. Why do men exist at all? What did God make them for? What is the final cause of creation? The answer is stated in the central formula of Christianity, "I believe in God the Father; and in Jesus Christ His Son." That is to say, God's essential nature is such that He has not remained lonely. That instinct of propagation, the most imperious of all impulses in man, is also the dominant impulse in God! He was begetting, and the Son was begotten from all eternity. But the Son is also "the first-born among many creatures." God will not sit solitary at the centre of an empty universe. If he were Power this might be, for the sense of power does not need to be either shared or admired in order to give satisfaction to its possessor. If He were Benevolence, Goodness, Truth, other sentient beings would not be a necessity to Him, for all these find complete gratification in merely existing. Jesus' description of God is, that He is Love. But Love, by its very nature, cannot exist without an object. So, from God's necessity for companionship springs Adam, "who was the son of God," and all his race. The *rationale* of Redemption is the same as that of Creation. It is rooted in the eternal fact that God's purpose must remain unfulfilled until He brings back His children to His love. As Jesus phrases it: "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." Let me call to your mind again

that wonderful parable of the Prodigal Son. There are four scenes in the drama of a human soul. The first is a splendid and happy home, where an old man and his children live in peace and free interchange of affection. The second is a young man in torn and ragged silks and faded garlands, standing wistfully in a confused scene where pipers and swine, harlots and prodigals, jostle one another. The third is a venerable and sad father sitting, waiting wearily the home-coming of his child. The last is a great house, illuminated, from whose open doors and windows pours out the sound of music, feasting, and the sweet cries of love.

The father keeps himself advised of his child's whereabouts through all his wanderings, and his love pursues him always. It cannot be but that the Eternal Father will follow every child through every turn and labyrinth of earth and hell. The Psalmist long ago had a fleeting glimpse of the truth, and left it upon record: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." He who thinks of this sublime burst as proclaiming only God's greatness, misses the meaning. It is that the relation of the Father and the child is such that, in the very nature of things, it never can be sundered.

But this pursuit by God of an errant child is com-

patible with sharp methods. Love can be cruel to be kind. God's love can brandish lightnings as scourges, and open before the prodigal sights of such abysses as shake the soul. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. The stern, but bracing, discipline of living is the means by which He brings His children home. But I cannot conceive of any mode, or place, or term of punishment which is not meant to be remedial. A place and mode of torment for human souls must be a necessary, but not a permanent, institution in God's universe. Eternity cannot be predicated of evil without bringing hopeless confusion into all thinking. The last enemy which shall be destroyed is death. Ay; it is only at long and weary last; but destroyed it shall be. For it is not the will of God that even one of these little ones shall perish. And God fulfils His will in many ways.

Salvation, then, is God's process of bringing his children back to Himself. It must be borne in mind that we are dealing here with things which cannot be forced, not even by God Himself. The old legend which tells of Julian the apostate lying wounded and dying in the desert, flinging up a handful of sand like a vanquished gladiator in the arena, and crying, "Oh, Nazarene, Thou hast conquered!" misconceives the very spirit of Christianity. God does not win, and will not have, victories thus. God is a Christian. He overcomes evil with good. His formula is, "My son, give Me thine heart." Anything less than this He will not have. He would win His children as the maiden is won to blissful

surrender to her lover, or as the strong man is bound in the cords of love.

Why do we so confidently assert all this about God? Because we see Him in the Nazarene. By walking with the Son we come to see the Father. We find God present and rejoicing in human loves at Cana; present, grieving with human woe, at Nain; present, and pitying human weakness and sin, before the women taken in adultery; present, and denouncing human selfishness in the Scribes and Pharisees; present, and gathering little children in his arms; weeping over human folly, as he looks from the mountain shoulder upon Jerusalem; eagerly grasping at the faintest proffer of divine love by the thief upon the cross; pleading in extenuation of mortal sin, that, "they know not what they do;" passing out of sight to the Father with divine benediction on His lips; disappearing into the heavens wherein the Eternal Heart of the universe throbs in sympathy with human need.

X.

PILGRIMS AND STRANGERS.





## X.

### PILGRIMS AND STRANGERS.

I Pet. II. 11.

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

THE fundamental question in Ethics is, *Why* should I do right? But the pressing practical question is, *How* shall I do so? St. Peter approaches this second question from a strange point of view. He appeals to a very unusual motive to produce right living. I will ask you, after a little, to look at it steadfastly. But first, I want to place before you some of the common arguments for purity of life.

Everybody acknowledges that the problem is more important than anything else, more important than right thinking or right believing. "His creed cannot be wrong whose life is in the right," is the way the secular world states it. Where and how to find a sound basis for morals is the thing which engages the attention of preacher, priest, social reformer, statesman, philosopher, and man of science. An essay published some years ago under the title, "A Scientific Basis of Morals," attracted the attention of two continents. How shall men be enabled to live rightly? This is the question of the age. We will

withhold for the present the answer which Religion gives. The secular answer is, "Righteousness comes by knowledge." That is to say, sin and crime are folly. The universe is so constituted that sin brings suffering in its train. If men were only wise enough they would be righteous. In point of fact, they are ignorant, short-sighted, and therefore unjust and incontinent. It is out of this feeling grows the high estimate which is generally placed upon education. Think of the way in which that idea is exploited.

• In the United States the machinery for education is probably more costly, more efficient, and certainly is more highly valued, than the institutions provided for any other purpose. The State may be remiss in laying, collecting, and expending many a tax, but not the school tax. People differ politically about everything else, but not about that. They all hold education in the highest value. The schoolhouse is everywhere, and the college follows hard after it. Those who have been fortunate enough to secure for themselves a university education are enthusiastic just now to extend it to the masses. It is seriously proposed to make attendance at school compulsory upon all children, under penalty of fine and imprisonment of the parent who is at fault. I ask you to notice carefully the reason invariably urged for all this. It is not that education makes men happy. No one would think of defending it upon the ground that knowledge is pleasure. The reason alleged is, that knowledge produces goodness. "Education makes men good citizens;" that is, it leads men to

discharge rightly the duties which belong to them as individuals, and the obligations which bind them to their fellows. This theory has been deliberately acted upon now for nearly a century? Is it true?

Many seriously question it. I doubt whether the practical result has been such as to satisfy anybody. I think people are slowly beginning to see the truth, that knowledge has no moral quality at all. It neither advances nor retards virtue. Upon the whole, it probably makes the conditions of virtue more favorable, but it has in it no quality which can produce righteousness. A generation which depends upon it to produce morality will come to fatal grief. And this is just as true of social, or political, or economical knowledge, as it is of purely physical science.

The Church herself has not been free from the prevailing delusion. She also has gone largely into the business of "education," and with the same purpose in view. If a thoughtful man steps into a Sunday-school supply-store, for instance, he will find much food for thought. He will be bewildered by the machinery for instruction which he finds about him. He will find that all the stores of sacred learning have been ransacked, and their contents arranged and packed for easy distribution among all people. Lives of Christ, written from every conceivable point of view; illustrated books of the fauna and flora of the Holy Land; libraries by the ton, and newspapers by the mile, for Sunday schools; charts, pictures, handbooks, maps, class-books, text-books, cards, toys,

puzzles, in a word, every imaginable and unimaginable device for the easy, quick, and sure distribution of knowledge about religion. Of course, the *rationale* of it all is evident. It is believed that by imparting knowledge, goodness will be secured. In this belief myriads are toiling painfully and patiently week by week to educate old men and maidens, young men and children, into the love and service of God. Now, I would not speak slightly of this. I am not worthy to loose the shoe-latchet of any one of thousands who labor thus. So far as all this activity is the *result* of pure religion, it is worthy of all honor; but so far as it is looked to as a *cause* of that same, it will largely fail. The reason is evident. There is a gap between knowledge and conduct which only something else can bridge. Our Lord forestalled it all. "Men will run to and fro, and knowledge will be increased: but when He comes, will He find faith upon the earth?" You will observe that this knowledge of which I have been speaking is one, all of the ingredients of which are gathered from this world. Now, the contention of Christianity is, that the materials are not present here from which to construct right conduct. Or, to put it differently, so long as one confines himself to considerations drawn from this world, there is no sufficient reason to be found why he should do right, and no sufficient motive to induce him to do so. It is for this reason that the apostle exhorts men "as pilgrims and strangers," that they should refrain from fleshly lusts. What he did say has been often misunder-



stood. Bunyan's "Pilgrim" has misled thousands. It is often thought that the Christian notion is, that one becomes a "pilgrim and a stranger" by adopting the service of Christ; that his profession estranges him from his fellows and the world in which he has heretofore felt himself at home. The Church is thought of as a little band who have voluntarily bound packs upon their backs, took staves in their hands, and gone away into a strange country. This is but a travesty of the profound truth. The apostle asserts that all men are in the same case. They do not become strangers to life by entering the service of God; but they are so always, and in the nature of the case. Shakspeare saw it clearly, as was his fashion. "Man is a being of large discourse, looking before and after." He is larger than the world in which he lives. If he shrink to its dimensions, he does so at the expense of his essential nature. Christianity has often been jeered at by practical men as being "other-worldly." It is so. This is its distinction. It looks outside this world for some of its most potent motives and most valued consolations. It remembers that here a man "hath no continuing city;" that "he cometh up and is cut down like the grass;" that "he continueth not in one stay;" that he is a pilgrim passing through a country in which he is closely concerned for the time, but which is only one stage of a far longer journey. This is not the place to show why we believe this to be a scientifically accurate view of the facts of life. But it is the place to say that this

“pilgrim view” is not any unwholesome sentimentalizing of a melancholy Jacques, but a broader, more worthy, and far more moral view of life than its opposite. The late Professor Clifford ventured to do, and evidently with sincerity of purpose, what very few have: he accused Christianity of being distinctly immoral in its effect. He asserted that its habit of withdrawing men’s attention from the things which may be seen and known, and directing them with such persistence to the things which are unseen and cannot be known, tended to weaken the only motives out of which practical morality can flow. He argued that this world will be best administered when men’s whole attention and energy are given to it, undistracted by considerations drawn from any other. I think many others have vaguely the same thought, as is shown by their readiness to bend to the authority of human conventions, and their slowness in permitting their conduct to be regulated by any thought of future or divine things. Against this I assert my belief that right living is neither safe nor reasonable, unless it be inspired and fortified by belief in unseen realities. The facts bear this out. Ask any one to point to the most shining example of human goodness of which there is any record. All votes will be cast for the same person who found no one to take up his challenge, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” But then He was the one who was dominated most absolutely by the over-world. “I came out from God; and I go to the Father.” And who will lay any thing to the charge of His first elect, the



earliest generation of disciples? Can any group of men and women be found of more brilliant and striking goodness? Where will the observer go to find displayed better virtue, charity, peace, gentleness, kindness, love, fortitude, patience, heroism, than to them? But this was while and because the spell of the Divine Pilgrim was fresh upon them. They looked for a better country, even an heavenly. Their citizenship was elsewhere. They believed in God, and loved him; hoped for heaven; feared the damnation of hell; were ware of their adversary the Devil; prayed and fasted and gave alms; and has the world ever seen, not better Christians, but better men or women? The Christian looks outside for the approval of his conduct, and, therefore, is not misled by sophistical courts such as exist in this world.

But let us try this truth by a more direct, immediate test. Let us watch a soul in the actual process of moral struggle. The question is of sufficient importance to warrant us in using a case laid bare to me in the confessional. Here is a man who has sinned, not once, but again and again. But his moral nature has cried out every time it has been outraged. The offence is not one which, like envy, wrath, malice, shows a diseased conscience. The sin is physical. He declares that it does not involve his better self. It is a rebellion of the members against the law of the mind. He has gone over the whole matter with himself a hundred times. He has said to himself, in extenuation, that "the offence is personal,

and tends in no way to injure society ; it harms no one ; it may be but a physical idiosyncrasy ; he is no more responsible for it than he would be for the unequal gait resulting from a deformed leg ; his case is exceptional ; God, knowing all the circumstances, will judge him by other laws than those established for others ; the other compartments of his moral nature are sound, and will keep him afloat, though this one be broken up." Now, I ask in all candor, why are not any or all of these pleas sufficient ? Why does his soul still cry out for deliverance ? He has violated no human law. He has not disturbed any social order. From the secularist point of view his moral agony is sheer folly. What shall I say to him ? What can I say that is more nearly true to the absolute reality of things than this : " I beseech you, as a pilgrim and a stranger, abstain from fleshly lusts ! " As a pilgrim and a stranger. He is sojourning temporarily in a material existence which will subdue him to itself if he will allow. It is as relentless as the law of gravitation. There is no force in the whole material or psychical universe which will avail to counteract it. What he needs is to realize that he is encompassed about with a great cloud of witnesses ; that the outcry of his moral nature, under the stress of physical defilement, is for him the voice of God : that " God hath set eternity in the heart of every man ; " that moral actions involve consequences which stretch away beyond the stage across which he is just now walking. It is only when one sets conduct in the light of eternity that it

can be seen in its true proportions. He who refuses to set the life that now is side by side with the life which is to come, will fail disastrously to order it aright.

It is hard to see how common sanity can miss this truth. Who would fancy that a mode of existence which is fitting during a week's voyage across the ocean would be fitting for a stable community ashore? Who can imagine that, taking all things together, men will really adopt the same code of conduct whether they believe the span of their existence to be fourscore years, or whether they believe themselves destined to a continuous immortality? From here emerges the potent force which produces Christian righteousness. Christianity believes the soul to have a long and noble history. It comes from God, and goes to "the heavenlies." It dwells here, like Israel did in the wilderness. There is enough in the life to fill the years full. It is of the deepest interest and significance. There is enough to be learned and to be done to engage all energies. But it is not final, and cannot be treated as final without becoming meaningless.

The Christian society has often been charged with an evil indifference to human welfare as such. Social and political reformers have often blamed the Church for holding aloof and leaving them to carry out their projects unaided. Christians, they say, are so busy "saving their souls," or "keeping the Church pure" in doctrine or order, that they have no time for, and no interest in, humanitarian labors. The

reproach has not been altogether undeserved. One who loves the Church is compelled at times to hang his head in shame at her supineness and her selfishness. But these have been the times at which she has been faithless to the spirit of her Master. Besides that, it is to be remembered that there are a thousand projects for the good of humanity in which the members of Christ's flock must work as individuals, where the Church in her organized capacity is not fitted to act. Her machinery is not adjusted primarily to carry forward reforms, but to produce and conserve in individuals the spirit which leads to work for humanity. In this spirit Christians have never been lacking. Indeed, it would not be extravagant to say that they have furnished the membership and the leaders for every movement for human weal which has justified itself by its results. In proportion as they have realized the shortness and uncertainty of human life, they have become the more solicitous to remove stumbling-blocks out of the path of those who will follow them. It would not be too much to say, that it is this sense of brotherhood in a common destiny which has caused in Christendom the innumerable alleviations in the pain of living. Pagans do nothing of the kind. Professor Drummond, in his delightful book on Tropical Africa, points out that all Africa is criss-crossed by countless footpaths. They lead in every direction, and they are all crooked. A stone is in the way, or a limb falls across the path, and the first savage who comes along goes around it. It never occurs to him to remove it in the

interest of the next traveller. The next comer steps around it also, and a permanent bend is made in the path. They have no sense of human solidarity. Where the spirit of Christ has gained a lodgement men have come to think of those who come after themselves. He "makes the paths straight." Jesus pours maledictions upon them who place stumbling-blocks in the path of human life. He passed through it Himself, and found it perplexing, painful. He rolled away the great stone which blocked up its exit, and shut out the view of what might lie beyond. Through the triumphant gateway out of which He passed to glory streams back along the path an illumination to light the feet and guide the way of pilgrims following; and they are sustained and inspired by the song which they hear of "Peace on earth to men of good will."







XI.

THE IMMANENT GOD.



## XI.

### THE IMMANENT GOD.

Luke XVIII. 20, 21.

“And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”

THE time when a child “finds out Santa Claus” is a moment of considerable peril to that child’s moral nature. He is apt to resent having been duped, and to remain for a time thereafter in a sceptical frame of mind. He is all the more resentful because he has been duped through his affections, and by those whom he loves and trusts. If their testimony is not trustworthy, he reasons in his childish way, whose is? Later on he finds out that he had not really been deceived. The love from whence came his cherished toys and presents was a real thing. In accommodation to his childish mind, it was personified, and named Santa Claus. While he understood as a child, the great fact of human love could only reach him in the concrete way in which children apprehend. When he became a man, and put away childish things, he put away his childish ideal of the rubicund gift-bringer, and put in place of him the affection which he found diffused among his fellows.

This is a parable, and, like all parables, must not be pressed with too much detail. But I think it fairly represents the change through which men's minds are just now passing as to the way in which they conceive of God. A general way of thinking about God, which has obtained ever since there has been any record of human thought, shows signs, in our time, of being abandoned, or, to speak more accurately, outgrown. The change is attended with grave peril to both faith and morals; but it is inevitable, and when it shall have been completed will be found to be good. Let me try to state just what is the conception of God which is passing away.

It thinks of God as an infinitely good, just, and powerful person, who has His seat outside the universe. He is self-contained and impassible. In His essential being He is so little engaged with the material or sentient universe that its passing away would not disturb Him more than the vanishing of a dream or the passing of a fancy would a human mind. For His own pleasure He has fashioned the heavens and the earth, projected them into time and space, and set them spinning. From time to time, in ways and for reasons which cannot be calculated upon, He makes incursions, incalculable irruptions, into the world. These visitations are irregular, extraordinary, attended with, and shown by, mighty signs and wonders. But ordinarily he remains in the heavens, and allows the world to proceed by fixed laws and processes which he established at the beginning. His interference at any time is a miracle. He does interfere at times,

being moved thereto by love or by divine indignation. He comes to one here and there with a benediction, and to whole communities now and again with a curse. He is thought of as the Great Artificer. Paley's watch is the symbol of his mode of acting. He monopolizes in himself an absolute goodness, so that mankind shivers in moral nakedness. He is self-conscious, and therefore to be pleased with adoration. He is angry, and to be appeased by those who know what the incense is which is grateful to Him, and where it may be found. He waits serenely while the generations of men are born, run through their little lives, and die. When the tree of humanity shall have dropped the last of its fruit He will have them all gathered up and sorted. The good will be carefully preserved for his delectation, and the bad will be cast into the jakes of the universe so as to be out of his sight. The Church is a little company of men who have been wise enough to discover who and what He is; to adjust their lives to His arbitrary requirements, and thus secure for themselves safety and an assurance of continued existence in felicity when the universe shall be presently broken up. As the corporation which holds the monopoly of spiritual knowledge in the earth, it has the right to govern men. It formulates the truth which has been given to it at certain known times and places, holds it as a "deposit," to which it has no power to add, and from which it has no right to take away. In a word, it conceives of the world as having been mechanically created from without; as mechanically governed from

without; as having been thrown out of its original harmonious movement by a malign influence from without; as redeemed and rescued by a complex device introduced from without. It stands with its back to the facts of existence, looks away off into space, and inquires, "When shall the Kingdom of God appear? And what shall be the sign of its coming?" It is bewildered and irritated at the reply, "The Kingdom of God is within you; it cometh not with observation." He who says, "Lo, here it is! or, Lo, there it is!" shows thereby that he does not understand what the thing is for which he looks.

But to change a habit of thought which has become rooted and fixed by ages upon ages of custom and inheritance requires also centuries of time. I think it is true that only now is the Church beginning on any large scale to comprehend some of the profound teachings of Jesus. "The Law was a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ;" but that schoolmaster did not lay down his rod and horn-book by any means as early as is usually assumed. He is still at work, and numbers his pupils by the myriad. Two things have happened, however, within late centuries, to bring his pupils to a truer thought about God and his kingdom. These are the Reformation in the sixteenth century and the Doctrine of Evolution in the nineteenth. They both produced temporary scepticism, but they were both enormous steps forward in the knowledge of God. The Reformation was an appeal from what claimed to be the voice of God speaking from outside to the voice of



God speaking from within the soul. It was an appeal from "Authority" to "private judgment." But its significance lay in its tacit assertion that the moral judgment of men is trustworthy. It asserted that the Kingdom of God is within, and must be sought there if anywhere. This is why those who opposed it did so so earnestly, and believed that thus they were doing God service. The central principle of the Reformation seemed to them to be idolatry. It was an attempt to find God in a place where he had never been looked for, and in a place where they had been taught that only unclean things dwell. It was an assertion of the indwelling of the Spirit of God in man. The truth gained ground but slowly, for all the habits of religious thought and action were opposed to it. Indeed, it was but a little while until the statement of the truth itself became a fetich before which the Reformed Church demanded prostration under penalty. "Justification by Faith" quickly passed from being the statement of an inner principle to be an outward and mechanical law; but the essential truth had been seen, and has never been lost to sight. It has operated throughout Western Christendom to bring out into consciousness the truth that men are the sons of God, and as such are immediately and always in contact with the Father.

The Doctrine of Evolution has also powerfully broken up the notion of God's outward and mechanical relation to nature and man. Indeed, it has smitten that notion to its death. It has rendered impossible many of the most generally accepted ideas about reli-

gion; for example, the notion about creation, Providence, and prayer. It is teaching men to look for God, not in the "violations of natural law," but in the movement of the natural order itself. This change of habit is not easy. Some cannot make it at all; some rage against the doctrine itself as a satanic deception to snare men's souls. The rage is idle and useless; more than that, it is dangerous: but it is not difficult to understand and to sympathize with those who feel it. They seek to heighten the idea of God as a creator and ruler by representing Him as working from without upon intractable materials, and subduing them to Himself. We think of these same materials moving forward slowly but surely toward the shape and purpose which is theirs in God. The processes are themselves divine. In the movements of the universe, and not in its creation or its interruptions, is God seen. Suppose one had been present as a spectator at the "creation," what would he have seen? He would not have seen the divine form nor heard the divine voice any more than now; he would have seen matter and life moving *seemingly* by their own volition from chaos into order; he would have discerned there, not the person, but the garments, of God. If he would see Him face to face, he must then, as always, look within. The Doctrine of Evolution is swiftly and surely setting men to think of God, not as a remote and inaccessible personage, but as the Father who dwells and works in the same house with His children. It fills with divinity all the processes of life; for it begins to see that they are

not aimless, but lead to a definite goal. It looks at the whole creation groaning and travailing in a common pain, and sees in the travail itself the hope of the final issue in the sons of God. It waits for

“That long-drawn divine event,  
Toward which the whole creation moves.”

It does not ask, Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring down the Christ from above; or, Who shall descend into hell? that is, to bring up the Christ again from the dead: for it knows that the Word is nigh us, even in our mouth and in our heart. Says Cardinal Newman, “If I looked into a mirror, and failed to see my face, I should have the same feeling as if, when looking at the world, I failed to see God.”

Now, this new way, which beyond question is Christ's way, of looking for God in the things which we see, is bringing about some tremendous results. First of all, it is attracting a new amount and a new kind of attention to Jesus Himself. As a truer estimate of humanity has gained ground, men have become more ready to see God in the person of a man. It is a significant fact, that all the “Lives of Christ” have been written since the Reformation, and far the most and best of them within the last half century. Before that there was a feeling that there was something unworthy in the attempt to examine closely the human side of the Divine Man. To do so would have the effect to bring Him within the borders of that human life which was thought of as destitute of

all divinity. Now all that is changed. His life has been traced step by step with painstaking exhaustiveness. All His human relationships have been eagerly studied. The result is, that He is seen in the very act of increasing day by day in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men; and as the man stands out more clearly before us, the God becomes the more unmistakable. Men look at Him, and then turn to look anew at themselves, and are filled with wonder, humiliation, amazement, and hope. They discern the Kingdom of God within them where they had fancied that slavery or anarchy held possessions. The result is to change their ideas and their lives. Sin is no longer a violation of an arbitrary statute enacted by an absentee ruler, but the breach of a vital law. Prayer is no longer the asking of favors of a powerful person, whose good-will or existence may be doubted if the favor be not granted, but the effort to bring about an internal harmony with that movement of things which is known to be of God. Righteousness is no longer a series of actions to which safety and reward are attached, but a personal adjustment to the movements of the kingdom of which one forms a part. The Church becomes a divine institution, not because its structure is imposed from without, but because it is the body which is formed by, and which protects and gives expression to, the divine life which is within.

I know there are some to whom this way of speaking is incomprehensible, and some to whom it seems untrue. I hardly need to say that I think it to be



true, and that they are in error. They do not think that great events, great forces, great institutions, like God, Creation, and the Church, are properly introduced into the world without a marked shifting and change of scene as each is presented. They expect the kingdom of God to come with observation. It never has appeared so, and cannot; but its obligation is none the less, because it comes unseen and unsuspected. The facts and forces of human life cannot be parcelled out and labelled "natural," and "supernatural." In Him we live and move and have our being. Had the Ten Commandments no Divine sanction for the generations which preceded Moses? Has the human conscience no Divine quality because the rudiments of a moral sense are discernible in a dog? Is a man's kinship to God on the one side rendered illegitimate, because on the other he is related to the brutes that perish? Is the Divinity of Jesus impossible, because his members were fashioned, while as yet there were none of them, in the womb of a woman? Is human government vacated of Divine obligation, because it is achieved and enacted by men? Is the earth not of God's creation, because we have learned to read the story of its slow becoming off the rocky pages of its strata? Is the Church not of Divine origin and obligation, because the steps and processes through which it has come into its shape can be traced? I am persuaded that a large part of the "evidences" for the truth of our religion, which have been built up with such labor and patience, are worse than thrown away.

They are attempts to say "Lo! here is the kingdom, or lo! there." They offer to vindicate the supernatural by pointing out its unlikeness to the natural. I am convinced that the immediate future of Christianity is dependent upon the recognition of the truth, that we live in the midst of an order which is at once Divine and human, both natural and supernatural. The attempt to segregate holy from common, sacred from secular, must be abandoned. The Divine origin and authority of the Church and its institutions will never be vindicated by emphasizing its separation from the world. Nor will it be by tracing up her title-deeds in the spirit of an attorney or conveyancer. Its identity is not to be determined that way. Humanity, under the operation of the spirit of Jesus, is slowly producing righteousness. This righteousness becomes organic in the Church. The spirit produces the body, and not otherwise. The spirit of goodness is streaming in from a thousand unsuspected sources, and under a thousand unsuspected forms. It is too subtile for identification, and too large for definition.

One great excellence of Christ's way of thinking about His kingdom is, that it makes one easy in the presence of good men and good deeds which are not visibly related to the Church. The old way did not. It could not deal with goodness outside the organization. It drew the pernicious distinction between religion and morality, and denied the latter any Divine quality. Christ values goodness too highly to miscall it wherever it appears. "He that is not



against me is for me." All the philanthropies, the sciences, the aspirations, the devotion, the charity, in a word, all the goodness of men, He lays claim to. They are His. The Church should be no less avid to claim them. There is no fear of her "purity" suffering. She possesses that spirit of life which takes up, and moulds to its own purposes, all human goodness. If she would become conterminous with the "kingdom of God," as she is meant to be, she must become as catholic as was the Son of man. She must claim for her own, absorb, and utilize every movement toward righteousness. She must not be surprised or unbelieving when she hears from the most unsuspected quarter the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!"



XII.

THE EARTH HELPED THE WOMAN.



## XII.

### THE EARTH HELPED THE WOMAN.

Rev. III. 16 :

"The earth helped the woman."

THIS text is taken from the most stupendous drama ever conceived. Even the "Paradise Lost" is petty beside it; its actors move mechanically upon an artificial stage. But in the vision of the seer at Patmos real beings perform real parts. One may frankly say that it is often impossible to make out the movement. One is bewildered at the prodigality of life and event which defiles before him. I think one has much the same feeling of perplexity in the Book of Revelation that he has at the spectacle of existence itself. Its complexity and seeming contradictoriness puzzle and often repel him. But this is the result, not of any lack of reality, but from its immensity. I do not propose to try to interpret even a single act in this Divine Tragedy; that is, to try to fit it to some human movement to which it may correspond, but to hold up a single mighty truth which comes out incidentally. But to see it I must rehearse a fragment of the drama.

John saw a great wonder in the heavens. A shining, dazzling woman, clothed with sunlight as

with a garment, and bedecked with the stars as with a coronet of jewels, descending majestically upon the fair earth, and immediately bringing forth her first-born child. The scene shifts, the sunlight fades into a tawny gloom, and a great foul, fierce dragon comes flapping to the earth, pursuing the gracious woman whom in her extremity he would devour. The woman snatches up her child and flees into the wilderness from his presence. The dragon, at fault in the chase, pours from his mouth a mighty flood of water which spreads abroad and threatens to drown the woman and her child in their hiding-place. Then the earth itself comes to the rescue. It opens its mighty lips and swallows up the perilous flood. The baffled dragon, after a time of impotent rage, lies down and dies.

The dragon is the personified spirit of evil; the earth is the earth; the woman is the Church of God. When I say the Church, I mean something which is not now anywhere to be seen, or ever has been, but that ideal society which is meant to contain within itself all righteousness. No organized society has ever yet been identical altogether with the Church in the true meaning of the word. The Church, when complete, will equal the Kingdom of God. But no organization as yet has existed, of which it could truly be said that either in extent or in quality it fulfilled this definition. The woman and her man-child represent the incoming tide of righteousness.

The "Earth" is that complex aggregate of men and things, in and among which the forces of moral



good and evil have their play. It embraces all with which men have to do, — things physical and things spiritual ; circumstances, events, society, natural affections, impulses, actions, in short, the sum total of the myriad entities which make up and environ human life.

Now, the noteworthy thing in the text before us is, that it represents the earth to be by nature and disposition on the side of the woman, and against the dragon. "The earth helped the woman." That is to say, the natural forces of life are on the side of the good and opposed to the evil.

I think the opposite notion is very generally entertained. Natural and evil are thought of as synonymous terms. The life which now is is contrasted with the life which shall be, as wrong is set over against right. We are largely under the domination of a pagan conception of life. I have at other times dwelt upon the ways and the time in which this unworthy idea found its way into Christian thought and theology. I now only speak of the fact. We call ourselves "vile earth and miserable sinners." We speak of "this naughty world." We unconsciously apply to life itself that sense of moral ill-desert which we feel as moral beings. We think of the earth as being under the domination of the Devil. We conceive of the world in which we live as being alert to thwart righteous motives, to ensnare the spirit, and bring it to disaster, or, at the very best, as being a dead weight to be overcome by the striving of the soul.

Is this moral estimate of the world true to the facts? In reply, I would ask you seriously to think of these following things, —

(1.) The strange fact that goodness steadily increases upon the earth. That this is the fact, any one must see who will look candidly at any two points of history widely removed from one another. He will see that a constant, though irregular movement toward better things is the rule, and has been during the whole period during which anything is known about the earth at all. This movement is far more strikingly evident in those places where the influence of Jesus has been at work; but it is also evident everywhere. This ought not to be so, on the current theory of life. If the “world, the flesh, and the devil” be really conjoined in a trinity of evil they must be, to all practical purpose, omnipotent. A mighty movement toward better things is the idea of Jesus. He looks for it confidently. He points to the forces which operate toward it. No one can see the growth of Christianity without a certain feeling of surprise and bewilderment. It ought not to have grown, as it would seem. What hindered the dragon from devouring the Man-child in His helpless infancy? His life and doctrine were in the face of the powers which held possession at the time. Apparently the whole drift of thought, custom, law, habit, tradition, convention, self-interest, were opposed to Him. His life was a stumbling-block, His words were folly. Yet against these all His kingdom has come up as a mighty storm

gathers against the surface winds, as the sea flows into and fills the bays and gulfs against the currents of all the mighty rivers. Why? A common answer is: Because a more potent opposing force has been introduced, which beats back and reverses the natural movements of life and man. I think the answer is faulty. It is quite true that the gift of Christ to the world was the Spirit of Holiness. We rightly conceive of this spirit as a self-conscious force. But we wrongly think of it when we imagine it to have begun its work in the world at the point in time at which the Incarnation occurred. It is introduced in the Holy Scriptures, as the primal, eldest energy which moved upon Chaos, and evoked order. Jesus' work was to uncover a spiritual energy which had always been at work, and which had never been altogether without witnesses. The mark of divinity in Him is that He recognized the essential divinity in the world where He was, and put Himself at once into communication with it. He expected the world to grow better. He believed that its elemental forces, though sore let and hindered, worked steadily in the interest of God and not of Satan. The survival of a pagan dualism, which early found a lodgement within the Christian Church, has obscured this truth, made it seem strange, and in some curious way, "unsound;" but one who reads the Gospels for himself, and puts aside all traditional notions about "original sin," "total depravity," and such figments of the schools, will see how entirely Jesus believes in, and hoped for, the world and the race with which He identified Himself.

The facts clearly show that His conception of the situation was the true one. Turn to what aspect of human life you will, and you see that our text is history as well as fancy. Watch the slow but steady humanizing of savage man; the progressive gentling of manners within the periods of history; the steady decadence of the horrors and the perpetuity of war; the growth in political purity and social conditions; the more and more complete administration of equity between man and man; the elevation into dignity and reverence of woman and the womanly qualities; the steady growth of the Church; its gradual disentanglement from the ideas of law and force; the amelioration of the condition of children, and the poor, and sick, and helpless; the steady clarification of moral judgment, — look steadily, I say, at all these things, which are real facts, and you will become more impressed with the thought that the universe is adjusted in the interest of righteousness. Mr. Matthew Arnold accounts for it all by the existence of “A stream of tendency, — a Power, not ourselves — which makes for righteousness.” There is no need to quarrel with his phrases. They are striking, and up to their measure, true. But St. John’s phrase is better: “The earth helped the woman”!

The truth is one which, when it is realized, must profoundly affect one’s whole thought about life, and especially about religion. Every one knows that motion is finally “in the line of least resistance.” If the environment amid which the soul dwells, as well as the qualities of the soul itself, are such as make it



move more easily toward wrong than toward right, then toward wrong it will go. And it will be hard to persuade it that it is blameworthy for moving so. It follows its nature, as all things do. It brings forth fruit after its kind. Can men expect to gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? But if this be true, it sets one to re-examine more carefully what is the intrinsic nature of this plant man-soul. Is it a vine or a bramble, a thistle or a fig-tree? Is the soil from which it springs a hateful compound of bitumen and poison, or is it the kindly earth full of heavenly juices?

It is true that the Saints, both those whose record is in Scripture, and those now living, often cry out under stress of evil, that the world and the flesh are leagued with the devil to bring them to death. Through the smoke of their battle the heavens loom lurid, and the earth gives a diabolic sound. Their natures are torn asunder, and they find the movements of the members shaping itself into a fixed law opposed to the law of the mind. But this is always a temporary, passing despondency, a discoloring of the real vision. It is always followed swiftly by a hopeful mind, in which the earth and all that dwell therein are seen to be the Lord's and not the devil's. The sober judgment of humanity is, that the world is so constituted that right triumphs and wrong is beaten down. The theme of poetry, fiction, and the drama is the way in which circumstances conspire to bring to naught the evil-doer. Who would read a story in which the hero comes to grief

and the villain succeeds? Who would go twice to see a play in which the heroine is cast out ashamed, and the betrayer brought to honor? The novelist and the playwright but personify the deep instinct which possesses all unsophisticated minds that the universe is conducted in the interest of goodness.

Nothing could be worse than that devilish notion which masquerades under the mask of godly fear, that organized righteousness, as it is represented by the Church of Christ, is fighting against odds. She fights with certainty, because it is with ever springing hopefulness. What man or woman is there who has "come out on the Lord's side," who has not been distressed and disheartened by the thought that they were turning away from the real, stable, solid, winning things, to weak, sentimental, powerless, losing things? There is much in ordinary religious modes of speaking and thinking which paralyzes all enthusiasm.

But, after all, that portion of the earth which most concerns me is that piece of cunningly compounded clay in which I dwell. Suppose I take a lamp in my hand, and set about to explore the recesses of my own nature. Do its natural avenues lead toward light, or toward darkness? It is hardly needful to even formally disavow the hateful figment of "total depravity." We, at least, have not been reared under that blighting shadow. But in this mixture of good and bad, of God and brute, which I am, which is natural and which is unnatural? Which holds the rightful title to the possession of myself?



Jesus' opinion is not hard to find, although often so strangely missed. "Except ye be born again," He says. Be born again. But what does birth do? Does it change the embryo of a jackal into a lamb, of a tiger into a kid, of a demon into a god? No: it changes the environment of an already living creation, but does not change its kind. It remains God's offspring after the new birth, as it always had been. In His other great parable of moral restoration, he says that "when the young man came to himself" he turned toward his Father's house. When he came to himself, himself from which he had been estranged. The great apostle says that "the spirit of God works with our spirits." Works with them, not against. The bent of humanity is toward God.

But let us take account of all the facts. A spring which has been too long overloaded and pressed down comes to lose its "life." Christianity lays awful emphasis upon this fact. It fairly faces the possibility of a human soul losing its native divine quality. There is a sin unto death. There is a kind of being of whom it were better that he had never been born. The moral forces of the universe may be violated, and may bring disaster even as those of the physical world. But the question before us is, What are those forces, and in which direction do they operate? We believe that in God's world of men and things, it is the law of moral gravitation that things fall upward when unhindered. The earth helps the woman.

I would be sorry to have you think that all this is

from mere interest in speculation, or from any love of paradox. I believe that the principle I have tried to set out is not only profoundly true, but of the supremest practical importance. Surely the belief that he is working with, and not against, the order of things, will make one more hopeful in the struggle for inner righteousness. It will set him free from that antecedent despair which enfeebles the will, and paralyzes the moral energies. He who struggles with evil within or without will pick up heart of hope when he sees that the elemental forces of life are on the side which he has deliberately espoused.

Beside that, it brings purpose and meaning into the seeming confusion of the things which we see. A world thought of as intrinsically hateful will be filled with a babble of discords, wrangling, jangling, raucous voices. But when one comes, slowly, but at last, to perceive that it is in very deed God's world, he will hear in its multitudinous voices the harmony of the sons of God shouting for joy.

XIII.

THE SPIRIT WHICH WAS IN CHRIST.



### XIII.

#### THE SPIRIT WHICH WAS IN CHRIST.

Phil. II. 4, 5.

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

“As I walked by myself I talked to myself,  
And thus myself did say to me,  
Look to thyself, and take care of thyself  
For nobody cares for thee.”

THIS old rhyme is the concentration of human “wisdom.” Christianity pronounces it to be both sin and folly. The Epistle for the Sunday before Easter exhorts to an exactly opposite line of conduct. It urges that this other method of living be deliberately chosen, not capriciously, or for a moment, but that it be adopted as the habitual manner of living. It does not hesitate to assert that exaltation comes that way, — by the way of renunciation. It points to a supreme instance. It says that Christ did so, and achieved the supreme place in the universe thereby. He put aside all thought of His own rights, the right of equality with God, which includes all else, and abased Himself for His brethren, with the result that every other name in the universe pales before the lustre of His. It urges

men to adopt the same method of living, and promises a similar outcome of it.

But the Gospel for the same Sunday proceeds to show what was, in His case, the immediate consequence of the renunciation which He made. It was crucifixion.

Was ever any more Quixotic project entertained by sane men than that of which the Christian preacher is the professional advocate? It proposes to persuade men to renounce that manner of life which the experience of the ages and seemingly the necessities of existence pronounce to be the only safe, only possible one, and of deliberate choice adopt another, which is unnatural, fantastic, and which, upon the Gospel's own showing, brought Him who introduced it to irremediable grief. Is it any wonder that the doctrine of the cross seemed to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness? But the strange thing is that multitudes since St. Paul have found it to be divine wisdom and divine power. Let us see, if possible, how these things can be. First of all, I want to correct what I think is a wide-spread pious error in this relation, that is, that there is any good in pain. There is none. The lesson of the cross is not that there is any excellent quality in suffering. Adversity—like the foul toad which hath yet a precious jewel in his head—hath its uses, but a foul toad it is all the same. There is nothing in the life of Christ to intimate that there is any virtue in being hurt. I know that it has been read so very often.



But the reading is wrong. It is very easy to pick up any one of the crosses which lie all about, while it is so difficult to possess the same mind which was also in Christ, that thousands have done this easier thing, and fancied they were "imitating Christ." The widely celebrated book of à Kempis is disfigured by this very mistake. "It is vastly easy," says a great preacher, "to be a John Baptist so far as the locusts and wild honey go." The exaltation which the Epistle asserts has not its spring in pain, but in the spirit of which it speaks. Jesus went not a single step out of His way to find a pang of body or soul. Such hurts as might be avoided without missing His purpose were avoided. He had no experience of far the larger part of those ills that flesh is heir to. They did not come in His way. No pang of parturition, or paternal solicitude, or laborer's fatigue, or lassitude of sickness, or racking of physical deformity, or pang of hunger, or spasm of physical terror, did He ever feel. There was no reason why He should. Pain is not good, but evil. Nor does the cross either glorify it, or open up its meaning. It is to be avoided where it may be. But it is as unhesitatingly to be taken up when the spirit which we are examining finds it in its way. It is to be taken up, not because it is good, but because there is no other way to the point we would reach. But is it possible to induce men practically to adopt the spirit of Christ, that is the controlling principle of His life, when they know perfectly well that to do so will make unavoidable many evils which could otherwise be escaped?

What, then, was the spirit which dominated Jesus Christ? St. Paul does not call it by name, — and indeed, none of the names by which it has been called are quite satisfactory, — but he sees it at its highest in the Great Renunciation. The Hindoo prince, whom half the world reveres, sat under the bo-tree and resolved upon his great renunciation. Mr. Arnold has pictured it with dramatic fitness. He forsook his princely pleasures, and his sweet wife Maya, because all these were incompatible with his self-development. He struck, indeed, a high note, and myriads have listened entranced to his music. But the apostle's theme surpasses it as does the music of the spheres the harmonies of an orchestra.

“He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, emptied himself that he might become a man!” He yearned for men, and renounced the glory which He had with God before the world was, in order that He might win them. This is the spirit which His Gospel inspires, a love for men which will not allow itself to be beaten down by any evil which may befall, not even though the blow come from the hand of the very one whom love seeks! This spirit in Christ accounts for the cross which He came to bear; the cross does not account for the spirit. Having become a man, the rest was unavoidable. It is here that the whole ascetic principle misses the truth. The whole company of monks, and cloistered nuns, of stylites, flagellants, anchorites, and Christian fakirs, have

missed of the spirit of Christ. They have looked, every man, upon his own things, and not upon the things of another! Each has set before himself the task to rescue his own soul at any cost. Most have vainly fancied that by bearing self-inflicted pain they were paying a price. St. Anthony flies to the desert to escape from himself, and finds to his horror that himself had gone before him. The Florentine ladies flung their jewels into a heap in the plaza, because they fancied beauty to be a sin, and their mistake overtook them before the month had gone by. The "spirit of Christ" thinks not of itself at all, either well or ill. It finds its exaltation in seeking for another. For the joy that is set before it, it despises the cross, neither seeking nor shunning it.

I have alluded to the belief that fidelity to the spirit of Christ will bring its possessor into pain. That is true, it will. To "become a Christian" will of necessity throw one out of harmony with at least a part of his environment. It will change friends into enemies, both within and without. It is true that it will do so to a less degree now than it would have done a century ago, — to an unspeakably less degree than it would eighteen hundred years ago. Life has been Christianized to an extent which few realize, and in ways in which I will try after a little to point out; but there still remains enough of it hostile to make it certain that whoever bears Christ's spirit must also share his cross. Whenever the same spirit which was also in Christ becomes roused to self-consciousness in a man it comes into distress.

It discovers that the environment in which it had always lived, and in which it had felt at home, is not the congenial place it had supposed. Movements of the flesh which the man had always taken for granted to be normal and natural, he finds to be unnatural and monstrous. To bring them into subjection to the spirit, he discovers, to his horror, will involve pain as sharp as that of cutting off a hand or plucking out an eye. It produces disturbance where previously there had been contentment. The possessor of the newly-awakened spirit becomes aware that his foes are of his most intimate household, even his own thoughts and habits. Then the conventionalities of life are not adjusted to this spirit. They have been partially subjugated, as I said before, so that society is to a degree under the control of "Christian Customs," but there still survives a large body which is distinctly antagonistic to the spirit of Christ. These are confronted in every sphere, in society, in trade and business, in politics and science, in every place toward which the Christian turns. The cost of being a single-minded follower of Christ is enormous. It costs in self-restraint, in labor, in money, in repression of tastes, by cutting off whole fields of pleasure, not because they are intrinsically wrong, but because the Christian has no time to work them. It brings one into very painful relations to his fellow-men. It sternly bids him at the very outset to stop choosing his companions, as he has been doing, with a view to his own delectation, but with a view to their advantage. That at



once compels one to turn to "the poor." But the poor, by the necessity of the case, are the most unpleasing of companions. They take everything and give nothing. The spirit of Christ, whenever it is awakened in any one, compels him to readjust himself to his fellow-men, to art, and amusement, and business, and manner of life. This is a cross. It rise up before one whenever he resolves to "deny himself." If he is affrighted, and turns back into himself, the cross immediately sinks out of sight. But such a one is thereafter shut up within himself. Whatever he can find there he may have, but nothing beyond.

Now, what motive will induce a man to put himself under so exacting a master as the spirit of Christ? The Christian motives are potent beyond all description. It would go without saying, that they must be, in order to move so many and so profoundly as they have. They are two. They are not to be sought in any new fact which Jesus has created, but in eternal necessities which Jesus has uncovered. The first mentioned is self-interest. "He that saveth his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life, for my sake, shall find it." Everybody knows now that this is so. The glutton at the feast of life who reaches out on both sides, and gathers all to himself, is inevitably punished by loss of appetite, and the capacity to enjoy. Who ever thinks of a miser as being happy? The word itself is the noun whose adjective is miserable. But why is the successful avaricious man miserable? He has secured

what he started for. He set before himself the safety, adornment, and satisfaction of his life, and he achieved it. What then? Existence itself rounds on him. He saved his life, — and lost it.

But St. Paul avers that honor and exaltation lie along the path which Jesus walked. Is this not true? Has Jesus not achieved “a name which is above every name”? Whose is above it? The *plébiscite* of the race has already been taken, and is for Him. It has set Him in a category by himself, not only as divine, but as human. Two men have in late time called the roll of the world’s heroes. But both Carlyle and Emerson hesitate to classify Him. The gods have all fled before Him. If one of His disciples could have seen that in a few centuries it would have come about that the only choice possible for men would be Christ or atheism, — that every other god had left the field, — would he not have been ready to chant his *nunc dimittis*?

Remember Heine’s vision. At the gorgeous banquet on Olympus, where all the gods and goddesses sat about the table, a wan, bleeding figure enters, bearing a cross, which he lays down among the flowers, while one by one the guests slink out into the night, and have never been heard of since. It has come about that every knee in heaven and earth, which is capable of genuflection at all, bows before Him.

Nor is it only a remote and barren admiration for a majestic but impossible character. His spirit is slowly but steadily dominating human society. In



one form or other it is inspiring the most noticeable movements of modern life. What does all the social and political unrest of our time signify? Why has slavery gone? Why are men, and women too, so deeply concerned about the condition of the poor? What has caused the swiftly increasing contempt and indignation at the selfish and indifferent among the rich? Naught else but the spirit of Christ moving among men. All these phenomena are to be found only within Christendom, or in heathendom at those places where Christianity has touched it. The multiplication of charities, the decadence of privilege, the extension of suffrage, all these are but the slow dawning in the consciousness of humanity that every man is of such value that every other man finds his highest good in seeking him. Nothing could be more idle, because nothing more contrary to the facts, than to refer all this to "the law of progress." Where is there any such "law"? Where has it operated in the past, and where can it be seen at work now producing any such result, save among those peoples who have also voted the place of highest exaltation to Jesus Christ? Every high ideal has been brought in, and gained a place for itself at the cost of the blood of a Christian martyr. The first generation set the Son of man above the son of Cæsar, perished therefor, and the world adopted their view. The poor monk Telemachus leaped into the arena, and sternly bade the gladiators cease from throttling one another. The angry crowd poured down from the benches and tore him to pieces, — but there were no

more such spectacles. Howard was the laughing-stock of Europe for his crazy attempt to have convicts treated as men and not like brutes. But before the world had done laughing the reform had come. From the men and women who in their day were derided, mocked, accounted fools, stoned, jeered at, crucified, who despised the cross, thinking only of the glory set before them, from these the world has had its heart-hunger fed. None of them have ever intimated that pain was good. But they have sought the fulness of life. They have had faith to follow the spirit within them which they recognized to be divine, in the fixed belief that they would not be put to intellectual confusion or to ultimate loss by so doing. Many of them have apparently passed out of sight without anything to vindicate their obstinate faith. Many have looked along the *via crucis*, and have feared to venture to its end. But many have found even now that that way life lies. God is love; therefore, to be like Him involves cost. But God is strong; therefore, to be like Him is to be on the side which must finally win.

XIV.

THE LAW OF PROGRESS IN RELIGION.



## XIV.

### THE LAW OF PROGRESS IN RELIGION.

John ~~III~~. 12, 13.

"I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."

It is somewhat startling to observe the attitude of Jesus toward the current religion of his time. We are apt to forget that there was a Church then, and that He was a member of it. Whatever obligations in the way of belief and conduct such membership carried with it for anybody, it carried for Him. There was in the Church in His time, as there is now, a set of doctrines, a code of rules, a system of ordinances, a ministry, a code for conduct, a machinery of religion. Theological controversies and ecclesiastical were just as common as now. There were "schools of thought" in the Church then as now. What attitude did He take toward it all? This question is not asked from curiosity, but for a practical reason. Bearing in mind that He claimed no exemption on account of His divinity from the ordinary duties and perplexities which attend upon the life of a man, He is just as valuable to us for "an ensample of godly life" in things pertaining to religion as in things belonging to morals. And

surely here, if anywhere, earnest-minded men need and would welcome light. They belong by birth and inheritance to a religious society; in many cases they have publicly professed their allegiance to it; how far thereafter are they left at liberty to dissent from the doctrine or discipline of that society, and still retain their membership in it? The conduct of Jesus illuminates this question. He was a member by birth and inheritance of a Church whose divine establishment and authority He never once calls in question. He permitted Himself to "fulfil all righteousness" by complying with all its outward requirements. He was circumcised, presented in the Temple, made free of the corporation. How did He thereafter bear Himself toward the doctrine and discipline of His Church?

It seems clear that, in general, He went with it in its mode of belief and practice. On one occasion, at least, He invoked the aid of His divine power to enable Himself and His friends to discharge their ecclesiastical obligations, when He wrought a miracle to find the wherewithal to pay the Temple tax. But while He discharged His outward debt to it, He did not hesitate to dissent openly, and as a public Teacher, from many of its accepted beliefs.

For example, with regard to the nature and obligation of the Sabbath Day. Here He disagreed entirely with the orthodox view. This was a subject upon which His Church's opinion was well settled, and had been for a long time. His words and actions were thought by the religious world of His time and



place to be loose, dangerous, demoralizing, contrary to the Word of God and to the law of the Church. Nevertheless, He held, taught, and practised them. It is often assumed that He simply used His superior authority to abrogate and set aside the Law of Moses, as He had a right to do. But did He have the right to do so, under the limitations which He had set for himself? And did He do so, in point of fact? The facts are the other way. He had not then abrogated them. He only declared His individual dissent from them, and His emphatic rejecting of the accepted interpretation of them.

In the matter of marriage and divorce, which was then a cause ecclesiastic, His position comes out still more clearly. Here He dissented, not only from the usual practice of His Church, but from the Law of Moses itself. He declares that in the nature of things that Law was temporary and transient, and had been already outgrown. The moral condition of the people to whom the Law had been given had been long ago outgrown and left behind. He does not say that a new and more strenuous law was about to be put in place of it; but that such a higher obligation always had been in existence, and that its obligation became immediate at the moment whenever the moral perception of a people was clear enough to see it.

The Ritual Law of His Church, He seems to have disregarded almost entirely. He "went up to Jerusalem" with His disciples; but certainly He could not observed very punctiliously all those complex details

which an orthodox Jew would have thought bounden, or the record thereof would have been given some space in the minute daily record contained in the Gospels. He observed, at least, one Passover; but He used that to change both its significance and the manner of its observance. There is nothing in His life like that curious carefulness of the dying Socrates to provide that the regulation cock should be offered to Æsculapius. In speaking to His disciples His phrase is, "Moses said unto you; — but I say unto you."

But all the while He retained His membership in the Church of Moses, and recognized the Law of Moses to be in general operation. In those cases where the accepted views were inadequate or faulty He set them aside, and appealed to a higher and more universal truth. This He continued to do just so fast as His disciples were able to comprehend Him. When He came to a certain point with them, He tells them that He has yet many things to say to them, but they are not yet able to receive them. He says that His people will be able to do so in the future, under the guidance of the Spirit which He introduces. It is clear that He thought of that spiritual illumination as to be slow, gradual, progressive, continuous. This promise of progress in spiritual discernment could not have been meant, in the nature of the case, to apply to the particular *individuals* to whom it was addressed. Some of them "went backward, and walked no more with Him." Some passed away while still very backward. One, at least, turned

upon Him, and betrayed Him to the conventional ecclesiastical world whom He had offended. Like the other promises and commands given to His then followers, it was meant to be of continuous operation through all time, so long as His Church should endure. This is, indeed, the quality in which His Church is distinguished from that one which it superseded. That was organized around the idea of fixity, while His contained at its very centre the principles of progress.

Christianity, then, is meant to be progressive in every part of its structure, — in Doctrine, Organization, and manner of life. I do not mean only that it must always move forward in the way of gaining in bulk, in subduing to itself constantly increasing areas of the world; but that it must also undergo those inward and structural changes which are the condition and accompaniment of growth. A large portion of the Church has always been, and is, slow to believe this. It is distrustful of present inspiration. It looks to some period in the past, at which religious truth became complete, and stated finally. It does not easily associate the idea of progress with that of religion; for progress implies change, and religion has to do with things which are abiding. It is a very common way of thinking, that the phrase, "The Faith once delivered to the saints," means the body of truth given by Jesus to His disciples. The fact is, as can be seen by any one who will turn to the passage, that it refers to the truth about God which had come slowly to be known through many

centuries in Old Testament times. The emphasis ought to be laid, not upon "once," but upon "saints." Faith always has been, and always must be, associated with sanctity. But it cannot be the peculiar possession of any particular epoch. But it is far easier to think of religious Doctrine as consisting in a set of definite propositions, strikingly displayed to a certain set of persons at a definite time, and by them passed on intact, than it is to think of it as a living body of truth which changes its form of expression from age to age, so as to adapt itself to the various generations and peoples who receive it. It is easier also to think it rounded and complete, as it is ideally, than to think of it as coming slowly and increasingly, as it does, into the apprehension of the Church.

The same thing is true about the Bible. The popular mind always chooses the easier of two forms of thought. It thinks of the Bible as a book. It thinks of God as having sat down deliberately to reveal something to man, and of His having caused that revelation to be written in a book for its preservation. One has only to bring the idea out into a clear statement to see how inadequate, how childish, it is. But then it is easy to think thus. On the other hand, the real truth of the matter requires serious effort to get it before one's apprehension. The Bible is not a book at all. It is rather a library of many volumes, written by all sorts of men, and at various times and places, during a period of more than a thousand years. It is the story of the way in which men



received a revelation of truth which God opened up to them slowly, painfully, little by little, as the world grew older and wiser, and more and more able to apprehend it. Beginning with the simplest moral proposition, the knowledge of good and evil, it goes on slowly to the manifestation of God in the person of His Son. But the Son expressly says, that although the revelation had been made, and stood thereafter staring men in the face, they would only be able, little by little, to take it in. He declared that the Spirit of truth which He revealed would constantly lead the successive generations of disciples into a better and truer apprehension of it. Sydney Smith was right when he said, "We are the Fathers." No generation of Christians, before the consummation of all things, may, without arrogance, affirm that it holds the whole, or even the best, truth of Jesus. If it really possesses the Spirit of Christ, it must reverently expect that Spirit to do His proper work, that is, to lead them into truth; but not in such wise that the next generation must receive the truth from it solely as an inheritance and without the power to receive immediate illumination. This is one of the hardest things for the Church to learn, — to believe in its own inspiration. It glorifies a past time which, for those who were then in it, must have seemed as gray and work-a-day as does our own time. We transform it in imagination. When we would express our belief, we tremble to pass outside the Creeds which it formulated. When we would frame a Liturgy, we seem to be smitten with a present

dumbness, and can find fit words for our devotion only in the prayers of a dead and gone generation. Do not misunderstand me ; no one could feel more profoundly how fatal a thing it is to break with the past in religion, to interrupt at any point the current of Divine life. But I insist that even "they without us cannot be perfected." The things of God, in order to produce the sense of reality, must be ours, not only by inheritance, but also by discovery. I think that what we of this generation need, above all else, is to believe that God has a blessing for us also.

That each stage of development in the kingdom should show its own peculiar form or type of life, ought to be evident for various reasons.

In the first place, because movement is the law of Life. Only lifeless things remain unchanged. The instant one ceases to think of the Church as an "Institution" or an "Organization," and comes to realize that it is a living organism, he sees that this must be so. There is a profound truth in the phrase, "The Church, the Lord's Body." His body, not His monument, or His record, or His house, but His living members. Being so, it must show the same phenomena that all living things do. It must integrate and disintegrate. Dead and worn-out matter must drop away from it (for the most part insensibly, as from a living body), and be replaced by new and fit material. But being plastic with life, it ought to be expected that it will, while maintaining its unbroken life, become modified in time and place to fit its constantly changing environment. This was clearly



our Lord's thought. What does He mean by His parables of yeast and grain and vine? The leaven, to fill the figure, must grow. But growth means persistence of identity, together with change of appearance. The little lump of dry cells which begins the ferment, is hardly recognizable in the moist, expanded lump of leavened meal. The same yeast shows quite different appearances in barley-meal and in flour of wheat. How unlike in their several aspects to sight and sense are the fibrous roots, the lusty stem, and the clustered grapes of the same vine. Yet all see that they *are* the same plant. Who will say that because the Church in America in the nineteenth century is unlike in appearance to the Church in Asia Minor in the second century, it is any the less really or less completely the Church of God?

Beside this, the palpable fact is, that Christianity has been profoundly modified in passing through the centuries, without losing or even imperilling its identity. Suppose an observer able to calmly observe it in actual life at Antioch in the first century, and again at Constantinople in the fifth, again at Rome in the fifteenth, and at London or New York to-day. He could not mistake but that it was the same body, animated by the same spirit, in every stage; but the bodily features would be as diverse as are those of the diverse races among whom it has lived, or as is that of the child from the youth or the man. He would see it at one stage with but a fragment of a New Testament and only the rudiments of a creed.

He would see it again with the canon of its Scriptures closed, its creeds drawn out in detail and settled by formal council; and again with an elaborate Ritual and Canon Law added; and again, maybe, with much of these dropped away. But at what point could he say, Here it began, or here it ceased, the living Body moved by the living Spirit of Christ?

That there is a possible peril in this way of conceiving of the Church cannot be denied. It is the peril which attends upon living. If only it were possible to have the whole subject matter of religion settled, fixed, put in final shape once and for all times and all men! Ay; if it were possible. If we could only be assured that the last word of Biblical interpretation had been said; that the last clause had been added to a Body of Divinity, no part of which should ever again be in danger of decay; that the Church's Order and Discipline were settled and working with the precision of a machine; that our sole responsibility was only to preserve it all untouched, and pass it over to our successors! Then there would have been at least one generation of disciples to whom the Master would have had no need to say, "I have many things yet to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now."

But no: religious truth neither comes, nor operates, nor abides, nor is transmitted after that simple fashion. Religion is a vital process. The Church is a living thing. As the nature of love can only be known by loving, or the quality of life by living, so the truth of God as He is made manifest in His

only Son Jesus Christ, is only reached by His Church, or by any individual soul, as the Spirit thereof takes of it and mingles it with the currents of the soul's or the Church's life. This can only be as each life is able to bear it.



XV.

RELIGION AND KNOWLEDGE.





## XV.

### RELIGION AND KNOWLEDGE.

Dan. XII. 4.

“Men shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”

Luke XVIII. 8.

“When he cometh, will he find faith on the earth?”

THERE is a very strange connection between these two passages of Scripture, spoken half a thousand years apart from one another. When the prophet saw the vision of the last days, the thing which made its impression upon his imagination was the wonderful quickening of intellectual activity. Men shall run to and fro, and there shall be a mighty increase in human knowledge. When the Saviour looked upon the same picture, it raised a question, apparently, in His mind, as to whether the Faith which He had come into the world to establish would be able to survive such increase of human knowledge. There is certainly not only a relation between these two passages, but there is also a relation between the two things themselves, — between the increase of human knowledge and the persistence of the Christian faith.

It has been thought sometimes that the one is incompatible with the other. Or, at any rate, that the very worst possible condition for the subsistence of

the Faith of Christ is, or would be, a time when human knowledge would be greatly multiplied, when men would run to and fro, characterized by that restlessness which always marks intellectual progress.

Certainly it must be agreed upon, the thing which characterizes our century is its increase of knowledge. We are blinded to this very largely by our own familiarity with the fact ; but it is the simple truth, that the world has increased in knowledge more in the century in which we live than it had in the twenty-five centuries which preceded it. It sounds a startling thing, and yet it is simply true, thinking of human knowledge and human discovery as a pathway along which men walk, that they have travelled as far in the century in which we live as the race had travelled during the twenty-five hundred years preceding it. The astonishing quickening of intellectual activity, the extent of the domain which has been conquered by man's knowledge, and brought within the range of his understanding within the last century or two, — indeed, within the last century — is simply marvellous. You can hardly count on the fingers of your two hands even the names of the sciences which have been discovered and developed within the memory of men yet living. Just think for a moment of a few of these as samples of the extraordinary extension of human knowledge which belongs almost to our own generation. Geology, for example, has a history of less than a hundred years. The very name is a new coinage ; and it is coined to

represent a new fact. It is only within the last century that science has at all begun to turn over the leaves of the rocky strata in which our earth is bound, and to read from them the records of creation. Anthropology has extended its researches into the remotest past. It has ransacked every cave in which men hid themselves, whether five thousand or five hundred thousand years ago. It has turned up the drift that lies upon the earth's surface, and has read off the record upon every tusk and arrowhead and fragment of ancient civilizations that lies hid away in every secret place upon the earth. Science has taken its microscope, and followed the mysteries of life away into their most secret recesses. Nothing has been found so small but that human knowledge can take it, and learn from it something which adds to the sum total of human knowledge. It has traced life away down to its very beginnings; followed it through all its secret ramifications; traced its relations; has followed it far more than from the cradle to the grave; it has followed it from the very first step of half-living existence, through every step to the death and resurrection of the human body.

New arts have been brought into use. All the marvellous triumphs which followed upon the discovery of steam and electricity,—and you may name such things by the dozen,—I only name these as samples. But I beg to press upon you this consideration, that all these things have been achieved within the century in which we live.

Now, it would be idle to think that this extraor-

dinary amount of new discovery in the range of human knowledge would not react upon men's Religious faith. There is a connection, there always must be a connection, between what men know and what they believe. It is just as idle to imagine that discoveries in the arts and sciences will not react upon, and change, and in some sense permanently modify, our belief, as it is to think that civilization will not modify our ways of living, and therefore our social customs, and therefore our affections and habits of thinking.

I beg you to think for a moment how closely all our habits of Christian believing are bound up with the things which we learn from physical science, which belong to the sum total of the world's knowledge,

When Copernicus enunciated his theory of the solar system, he did very much more than write books on astronomy. *He changed the Christian religion as well.* If you will think for a moment, you will see how. Suppose, as the world did suppose until a few centuries ago, that this earth was the very centre of all things, that the sun, an orb'd blaze, was a yard across its face, moving around it from day to day, and the moon, another attendant around it, with the diameter of half a dozen inches; that upon this earth, the one thing which stood pre-eminent for dignity and magnificence was man; and then you can easily understand how men believed that they were in very close and immediate relationship with God. For what was there between them? There was

God, that sat there in the remote space. There were the angels, that had communication between God and man. And then men, who inhabited this earth, the most dignified, the greatest of all things, next to God Himself.

But now comes a new science which says to the human race, You are mistaken about the position you hold in the universe. Instead of your having your habitation upon the central orb about which all the rest wheel, you are simply little specks walking upon an insignificant fragment, in one of the farthest off and most remote corners of space; you must abdicate the honored position which you had in the universe. As the world, the material world, was belittled, the human race was belittled with it. And so it was a natural step, although maybe a long step, from that position which man claimed for himself, as being only little lower than the angels, to the new position which man claimed for himself as being little higher than the apes. The step is a long one, but it is by no means an unnatural one. It is the necessary consequence of the dethronement of our race from the place which it supposed itself to hold in the universe.

The belief in miracles has been affected in a similar way. Fancy reading the story of the miracle of Joshua to the Christian world of four hundred years ago. "The sun stood still over Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Ajalon." There was nothing wonderful about that. Why should not the sun stand still? It was made to go around the earth, to



serve as its satellite. There was nothing wonderful in the portent, nothing to stagger the imagination of the Christian faith. But wait until men go to and fro, and knowledge has increased. Then read the same story to the world of the nineteenth century, and they say, It is a mighty thing, this stopping of the sun over Gibeon. It involves a paralysis, or at least a temporary pause, of the whole solar system, of worlds beyond worlds, sweeping away to the borders of the universe.

For this reason such a record as that contained in the holy Scripture lays more stress upon our faith than it did upon the faith of our forefathers. It does. The resurrection of the body, for example, was one thing before the laws of chemical metamorphosis were discovered, and is quite another thing now.

It is idle to think that all these discoveries do not have their influence upon the Christian faith. They must do so. They have very seriously affected, not only the body of the faith, but the way in which Christian minds stand related toward the "Faith delivered to the saints." There are certain secondary doctrines, which at one time were held to be part and parcel of the fundamentals of the faith, which were once entangled with the Apostles' Creed, which now have become obsolete. When it was said that it might be that the world was not created in six natural days, there were thousands of devout Christians who were terrified at an idea which struck, as they conceived, at the inspired record of creation, an idea that would destroy the very possibility of believing anything. There was a time



when it was supposed that every word of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament was absolutely and literally the transcript of the revelation of the Holy Ghost. Now both of these beliefs have been profoundly modified. They have been modified at the cost of casting many loose from the anchorage which held them within the faith. But, apparently, there has been no way of preventing it. When the doctrine of Copernicus was enunciated, it was laid under the ban of the Pope; and there it lay, officially, until the first quarter of the eighteenth century was ended. And yet it steadily asserted for itself a place in the knowledge of men. So, whenever a fact has once found lodgement within the sum total of human knowledge, it must have its influence upon the Christian faith. We must adjust ourselves to it, for the reason that a fact is one of those immutable things which cannot be changed by any exercise of faith.

Now, a very disastrous consequence of this has been, that there is at present an alienation of certain whole classes from the Christian religion. There are a considerable number of educated men who hold themselves aloof almost entirely from the gospel of Christ; especially those whose education and training have been in the physical sciences, along which the line of discovery has been the most rapid. And they have run to and fro so rapidly that they appear, at least temporarily, to have outrun the faith which belonged to their fathers.

There has also come about within the circle of

those who hold to the Christian faith something of indifference, and very much of apprehension. It seems to them that when our Lord cast his eye over the years that were to come, and saw the end of all things, the apprehension in his mind was a well-grounded one as to whether or not the time might not come before the consummation of all things when, by the increase of knowledge, there should have come about an almost entire loss of faith.

What shall we say to all this? Here stand the two terms of the problem. Knowledge has increased; faith, in a certain aspect, has decreased. What lies in the future? Is knowledge going on increasing, and is faith going on decreasing? or is it possible that we have misread the signs of the present time? I answer unquestionably, that the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ is, by the very terms of its enunciation, bound to grow, and to grow continuously. If it could be shown at any moment, that, taking the whole world together, the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is steadily decreasing, it would justify very much more than apprehension for the future of the faith. It would argue something radically wrong with the faith itself. The Christian man dare not admit at any moment that the faith of his Lord Jesus Christ has ceased to move men's minds. It must continue to grow, or it must be seen to be stricken with the first symptoms of its inevitable death.

Why is it, then, that we who are quite alive to the facts, and deeply sympathize with the spread of

human knowledge, have no apprehensions concerning the future triumph of religious faith? I will try to say why none of these things move us.

The first reason is this: Because Christianity does not appeal to common sense, but to *common necessity*. I beg you to ponder this. If Christianity made its last appeal to the universal consensus of the human understanding, there might come times in the world's history when people would refuse to listen to the voice of God. But it is not so. What we call "common sense" is simply the average wisdom of a generation. It is the knowledge that each individual has taken and poured into the common stock, redistributed as divided by the number of the persons who contributed it. Now, it may be possible, I fancy it is possible, for a whole generation, as it is for an individual, to go mad. But the salvation of the race cannot be contingent upon its always thinking rightly any more than that of an individual can. If Christianity appealed to the understanding; if, in its last resort, it must give a logical reason for itself, — there would be a danger that times might come when humanity might move to moral disaster because of an intellectual fault. But you will notice this peculiarity about the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ: it does not appeal to the understanding in the first instance, but to the common *necessities* of humanity. These necessities are abiding. For instance, there are some ineradicable instincts of the soul: one is the fear of death; another is the hope of immortality. Now, for the purposes of religion, it makes not the

smallest difference whether you and I have come up by successive steps from the mollusks, or come down formed in the image and fashion of God. It makes not the smallest difference as to what our origin is, so long as we are here, endowed with certain ineradicable instincts. To these Christianity appeals. It is not because it is demonstrable in terms of the understanding, but because it appeals to these instincts, which cannot be crushed out, nor forgotten, that it is so secure in the world. Remember, it is to the *average* man that our Christianity appeals. And this, not by accident, but because there is a reason for it. "For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" "I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, verily, I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven."

I beg you to notice this, Christianity appeals to the "common people," that is, to average humanity. If for any reason a man is lifted up very far above the average, by abnormal wealth, by abnormal intellect, or anything that removes him very far above the average of his fellows; or if anything drags him very far below that average, — Christianity cannot appeal to him. If it does, it does so "hardly," both to the "fool" and the "rich man." Why? For the



reason that these are either above or below the common humanity to which Christianity speaks. Now, then, the great mass of humanity can always be trusted; it can always be depended upon to receive Christ, — always. Culture, pleasure, and luxury — I care little in what shape or form it comes — soon cease to move. For a little while a whole generation may be so intoxicated with intellectual advancement that it forgets God; but the thought comes back again to the mass, and may always be depended upon to come back, for the reason that all these things are not sufficient to satisfy those imperious necessities to which Christ offers himself as an answer.

Humanity does not remain long either in the lyceum or the dancing-hall. The tragedy of life may always be depended upon to bring them back again to that sober condition of mind into which the Christ can come. So long as the fact remains, that human life is ushered in with maternal pangs, that laughter ceases when discretion begins, that men die with groans, and that those who are bereaved sit beside their graves, and shed tears of bruised and broken affections, so long it will be that the tragedy of human life may be depended upon to bring the great mass of men back to the feet of Jesus Christ. And it is therefore that He has appealed, not to men in a mood of high exaltation, and not to men cast down in despair; but to the great mass of men, living, and loving, and hoping, and thinking, and suffering; and never appeals for any great length of time in vain.

The story is told of that French philanthropist, Laravelere-Lepeux, that once he invented a new religion. It was a sort of modified and improved Christianity. He fitted for it a ritual and a series of doctrines which he embodied into a creed ; but, to his astonishment, his propaganda met with no success. Men listened to what he had to say, turned away and laughed, and went on with their frivolities. So he came one day to the ex-bishop Talleyrand, complaining that his new religion could get no hearing ; that men were so wedded to their old faiths, their old worship, that they would not listen. The keen old man sympathized with him, and said to him, " It is true ; it is very hard for a new religion to get a hearing. I am at a loss to advise you what to do." And then, seeming to bethink himself, he said, " There is one thing which you might try. I would suggest it to you. Get yourself crucified, and rise again the third day ! "

It was a flash of light. Our Lord Jesus Christ has made His way into the very heart of the drama of human life, *because He has got Himself crucified and risen again the third day !* He has gotten hold of the two most potent and imperious instincts of the human race, — the fear of death, and the hope of immortality. And because He has gained the attention of these two instincts He sitteth in the heavens and alloweth the heathen to rage, and the people to imagine a vain thing. Sooner or later, as individuals, they will be driven by their instincts back again to cling, in the shipwreck of all their hopes, to the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ.



Beside this, so far as one can see, faith is not declining. The century in which we live, the very century which has seen all these wonderful strides of human discovery, is the first century in the history of the Christian faith in which the membership of the Christian Church has doubled itself. In 1810 there were, in the United States, one communicant to every sixteen of the population. To-day there is one for every five. Over and above that, although conspicuous saintliness may be more rare now than in the days of the martyrs, yet I think it is simply true to say that the average holiness and righteousness of the world is higher and better and purer than ever it was before. So that we listen serenely to all the prophets of secularism. They may run to and fro as they please, and cry out in the streets that the end of our faith is come. We listen placidly to them, as we do to the confused and frightened voices of many friends of the faith.

We turn our minds to the parable of Lessing. "Once upon a time a certain king of a great realm built himself a palace, the most gorgeous that ever had been planned, the wonder of the whole earth. A strife arose among certain connoisseurs as to some of the obscure ground plans upon which the palace was constructed. The conflict lasted through a great many years. While this conflict was going on, it happened upon a time, that a watchman one night cried out, 'Fire!' And the architects began running hither and thither, each with his plan, squabbling as to whether the fire had broken out in this place,

or whether it had broken out at that place, and as to what was the best spot to apply the engines. And its friends all took to wrangling. Alas, alas! the beautiful palace will be burned. But it stood there; and presently they discovered that it was not on fire at all. Behind it there was an extraordinary display of northern lights, which shone through it with such brilliancy that the palace itself seemed to be full of flame."

So we say, Let knowledge increase, let it run to and fro, let it lighten up the world all it will, it will only illuminate, because it cannot destroy, the city of our God.

XVI.

BREAD OR GOD.



## XVI.

### BREAD OR GOD.

Matt. EV. 1-4.

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

FIRST of all, I wish to call your attention to a word by which you may possibly be misled. “Then was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted.” Since our Bible was translated into English, the English word “to tempt” has very greatly changed its meaning. At that time it meant to test. It expressed such an action as when you take a cable and apply a weight to one end of it, the other being secured, to find out how much it will bear. Or as one takes a piece of ordnance and tests it with charge after charge of increasing weight of powder to see how much it will endure. Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tested. I beg you to bear this in mind, because the argument that I propose to lay before you will largely depend upon this distinction; i.e., the fact that

“temptation,” wherever the word is used in Scripture, means trial or testing, — as when one applies an acid to a coin to see whether it is good metal or base.

Every year the Church sets apart forty days to be used in a particular way, and distinguished from the rest of the year. Many would give as a sufficient reason for doing this, that it is an ancient and pious custom. That the Church has always done this, perhaps may be a sufficient reason. I think it is usually well to assume that a thing which has been done over and over again by thoughtful and good people, must rest upon some sufficient reason. But I think that the time may be well expended, if we look a little farther than that, and try to ascertain if there is not some reason much more profound and farther-reaching than custom in regard to this matter; for I think there is no custom of the Church as difficult to understand, and which is as generally, I may say as universally, misapprehended, as that of the observance of Lent, or rather the principle upon which the observance of Lent rests. If you will notice, every time when Ash-Wednesday comes and Lent begins, the newspapers begin to make merry over it. Sometimes they affect an air of profundity, and give a reason for it, but ordinarily the reason they give is the wrong one. They crack that joke upon the *débutante* now about to become the *devotée*. The fashionable man now retires from company and takes refuge in his club, and waits in a wandering, desolate frame of mind, until his forty days be over.



The rest of the Christian world looks upon us Church people in our observance of Lent, our mortification of the flesh, and are not well able to make out what it all means. They see that good people do practise it, — people whose judgment is safe to follow in other directions, — but they do not always find these people able to give a clear reason for what they do. The philosopher has a reason. He says: It is simply a survival of an ancient custom. The time was when it showed itself in starvation, and scourging, and hair-cloth, and pease in one's shoes, and lacerations of the flesh, and pilgrimage, and standing upon pillars, and letting one's hair grow, and going hungry. All that has passed by, or at least the most of it has; but there has come down to our age a certain survival of the ancient habit. To be sure, there remains but the shadow of a great name; but there are always certain persons who have inherited some peculiar weaknesses, superstitions, or traditions, which have mostly passed out of the world, and which will also, sooner or later, pass out of the world too. And the philosopher adds, that, to his way of thinking, there is enough misery in the world anyhow; that every man's life is sufficiently empty, to take it at its very best; it begins in pain, and it is marked all through with privations, and denials, and sufferings; that it is sufficiently empty, and that, instead of taking away from it anything which would sweeten it or lighten it, or make it more pleasant, the part of wisdom would be rather to minimize the suffering and to magnify as much as possible the innocent pleasures and amusements,

so as to make life more comfortable instead of more wretched.

There are also those inside our Church who do practise the duties that belong to the fasting season, who also give a reason for it, which, to my mind, is not satisfactory, although a good reason so far as it goes. They say: It is the duty of all men, more particularly of all Christian men, to mortify the flesh, to bring the body under, to elevate the spirit, to control one's passions, to cut away a temptation and gratification on this side, and an extravagance and luxury on the other side, and bring life under control; that this is best done by during forty days in each year taking the body in hand, stripping it of certain things which are allowed it at other times, saying to it: I am the master and you are the slave; you will have to do for a little while as I tell you to do; that it rests upon a certain inherent struggle between the body and the soul, between the flesh and the spirit.

Others say that neither of those which have been assigned is the true reason. The reason is this: We sacrifice certain things, or deny ourselves innocent indulgences during a certain period of the year, not because we expect to find any advantages from self-denial, nor because the things themselves are hurtful, but in order that we may have to give. It is for sweet charity's sake. We abstain from this thing and that thing during Lent, not because the thing is wrong, but that they may have the wherewithal to put in the alms-basin on Easter Day.

These are explanations of Lent. It is the survival of a superstition; it is in the interest of self-mastery; it is in the interest of alms-giving.

Now, there is a little truth in all of these, but to my mind they are inadequate. I think the phenomenon is altogether too large, the practice too striking and extraordinary, to be satisfactorily explained by any of these. Call to mind, in the first place, the extraordinary prominence of fasting and self-denial in the Scripture. The Old Testament is full of it. There is the "fast of the fifth month, and the fast of the seventh month." Every fifty years there was to be a general relinquishment of all individual possession in property, and a redistribution. From the beginning to the end of the Old Testament, you will find an unbroken series of general fasts, set at certain periods of the year, and lasting for days and weeks some of them. Over and above these you will find particular fasts enjoined for particular occasions. You will find that certain persons again and again religiously vow, that for such a length of time they will take no food or drink, or that they will let their hair and beard grow, or that they will mortify their flesh after some fashion. But it passes over into the New Testament also, and occupies a position of prominence there, which, I think, is not usually realized. Our Lord Himself distinctly recognized and inculcated the duty of self-denial under the simplest of all its forms, that is, the form of abstinence from food. He not only enjoined it, but He said *how* it was to be done, and the spirit of mind that was to go with it.

“When ye fast,” He says — assuming that they would fast — “when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance : for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face ; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret : and thy Father which seeth in secret *shall reward thee openly.*” What for? Why, for fasting. Take two or three examples as illustrations of the way that St. Paul treats this same subject : “ But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings,” thus ranking it with prayer, with endurance, with endeavor, with love.

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Now, bear these things in mind, — the extraordinary prominence of this duty of self-denial in the Old and New Testaments ; and then add to that this most extraordinary thing, that it has been practised universally throughout the whole of Christendom. If you will read the history of the Christian Church you will find passing before you a procession, unbroken from the days of the apostles until now, — penitentes, flagellantes, stylites, and all sorts of ascetics.

Then consider still farther that it is an idea which is by no means confined to revelation ; that it reaches



out far beyond where the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has gone ; that it is a custom as widespread as humanity itself. The Hindoos cast themselves before Juggernaut ; a mother throws her baby into the Ganges ; the Canaanites fling their children into the fiery arms of Moloch ; the fakir whips himself, and treads upon burning coals ; and the Mexican swings himself with a hook by the flesh of his back. All the history of the world is full of it. It is no new idea. It is no invention of those who wrote the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament ; it is lodged deep in the heart of humanity. Now, an idea which spreads out so widely, and gathers so much into itself, and occupies so prominent a place, is not to be explained by simply saying that it is good for a man to bring his body under control ; and that it is still better for a man to give to the poor. If the first one of these were the object to be attained, it might be done better by putting one's self into training as for a boat-race. The second one misses the mark. The question is not whether one shall follow the "model of knighthood" and be like Sir Philip Sidney who gave away the cup of water for which he was famished, to another soldier who needed it worse than he. This is not the question at all. The question is not whether Sir Philip shall give the cup to the soldier who needs it more, but whether he, famishing with thirst, shall pour it out on the ground and refuse either to drink it himself, or to let the other man drink it. Self-denial, as it is taught in the Scriptures, is *entirely distinct from the*

*duty of almsgiving, and from the virtue of self-control.*  
It rests on reasons of its own.

What does it rest upon? The truth is, it is the most subtle and easy to be missed of all religious ideas. It is so easy to mistake it for the Pagan thought, that one may "give of the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul." It is so easy to empty it of all its divine meaning, and turn it into a sort of a histrionic, make-believe fast and self-denial. I ask you to believe that it is one of the highest and most transcendent of all Christian ideas and duties, and to notice now, a little, what seems to be the ground upon which it stands. Here, as everywhere, when one is concerned about a temptation or a duty, the best thing to do is to go to the Master. Let us go to Him and see. When He was about to begin His great life's work, it was necessary that He should be tested to find out whether He was fit. He recognized it. He sought no exemption. All human souls have to be tested at some time or other in their lives. Sometimes the test is a sharp and bitter process; sometimes it spreads over a long period of time; but no human soul can escape it. When He was ready to engage in His life's work, He found it necessary that He should be put upon trial. While He was undergoing this trial His whole nature was so taken up with it, that apparently He forgot all about the necessities of His body. He went not up into the mountain to fast, He went up to be tried; and the fasting was only incidental to the testing. Afterwards, however, He woke up and discovered



that He was hungry. Then came a test. The "tempter," the great spirit of evil, says to Him: "You are hungry; here are stones: you are almighty; turn them into bread and feed your hunger." Now mark what the alternative was, and what His answer was. He says: "Not so: hunger is a bad enough thing, to be sure, and I am hungry; but there is something more important than that. 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'" Now observe; He has got down to the very foundation of His duty. It is a duty which involves a choice. The question is *Bread*, or *God*? That is the alternative that faces Christ. It is the question that faces every man who touches Christianity. He stripped it of everything that is extraneous, and, being there as elsewhere our great Exemplar, He set the example in the most striking and simple of all ways. This was His dilemma:—Shall He satisfy His body? or shall He satisfy His soul? It is upon this that this whole idea and duty of self-denial rests. It grows out of the necessity for a choice between this world and the other,—between a man's own self and God.

But the issue does not ordinarily present itself after this simple fashion. If it did I fancy there would be few mistakes. If the bald question came to any one between his birthright or a mess of pottage, I trow very few would choose the mess of savory meat. But it does not present itself so. The truth is, that in an ordinary man's life these two alternatives, instead of confronting each other and

allowing him to make a clean, distinct choice, are continually confused; and the difficult thing to do is to separate them, to put one on this side and the other on that side, so that one can see what he is doing. We all promised at our baptism, "to renounce the Devil and his works." If one could see the Devil as he is he could renounce him very easily. The difficulty is not in the renunciation, but in knowing who the Devil is, — to recognize him, — because he comes in such a questionable shape. Now, precisely this is true in regard to all the things in life, — the good and the evil come to us so entangled and mingled, one with the other, that ordinarily it is impossible for a man to make a choice until he has first taken some pains to disentangle the right from the wrong, to put one on the one side, and the other on the other, so as to see the difference between them. Now, our Blessed Lord has done this in the simplest of all possible ways. He has reduced life to its first principles; and we, following the example of His temptation, endeavor to do the same thing. What is it we are trying to do? We are simply trying, as I say, to reduce life to its first principles, — to its lowest terms, — so that we shall be able to see what is good and what is bad in it. I think you must be conscious of how entirely human life does revolve about bodily necessities, — food, clothing, and shelter. These things represent constant quantities in man's wants. Food, clothing, and shelter! Notice what these do signify. They are most complex entities. Think of the magnitude

of the machinery for the production, transportation, and distribution of food; of all the commercial life and action associated with it; of the social life and hospitality which depend upon it. Take the matter of clothing. The most imperious of all laws, the law of fashion, grows out of it. Competition, vexation, vanity, pride, pleasure, — all have their root in this bodily necessity. Or shelter, — houses, ornaments, luxuries, all have to do with it. In combination with one or the other of these two things, it carries with it all practice of hospitality, all kindness, all friendliness, all interchange of human courtesies. They spring ultimately from one or the other of these three bodily necessities. Now, the bad and the good in these things are so commingled that no man can tell what is right, and what it is wrong, unless he take some trouble to disentangle them. When, therefore, we come, as Christian people, to our Lent, we simply say, we are going to attempt to do what Christ did. We are making an effort to see the great alternative, to solve the problem of what is the supreme necessity of life, to see what is “bread” on the one hand, and what is God on the other. As one should say: “Life is a very serious matter at its best, generally attended with much pain and privation. Usually I lighten it as I go along with pleasure and with innocent amusement; but now for a little while I will strip it bare, and see what it is. I will reduce it, as far as I can, to its simplicity, in order that I may see what is necessary, and what is not, that I may choose between them.”

Now, it seems to me that this is what the whole duty of self-denial, the whole practice of Lent, rests upon. It is the endeavor to realize what is the supreme necessity, — whether it is the body or the soul, whether it is this world or the other, whether it is “bread” or God. The practical outcome of the attempt is most beneficent. In the first place, it brings one into the Spirit of Christ; for this is what He did, putting on the one side “the glory that He had with the Father before the world was,” and which was an innocent glory, emptying himself so as to become as one of us. Now, as we empty ourselves we come into the Spirit of Christ, and are able to understand Him. And then remember the consequence, *that in proportion as we see Him as He is, in the same proportion we grow to be like Him.* In practice it works out most wholesomely. Dives, when he was clad in purple and fine linen, at his dinner-table faring sumptuously, was a most excellent man, full of good impulses, which even hell could not destroy within him; for even in the torment his second inquiry was whether something could not be done to save his five brethren: still, Lazarus was starving at his gate. Why? Not because Dives was cruel, but because he did not know what was going on outside his garden-wall. Now, it may be in this Lent, that within a half-dozen squares of your house, children are hungry, women are crying, men are blaspheming and thinking of suicide. It may be unavoidable, for sometimes poverty is not to be relieved. Poverty is a penalty which at times the

Christian man cannot relieve without doing violence to right. But the great question for us to settle is, whether we are taking our "bread" instead of our God, while the man at our gate is taking his God instead of his bread, or may be going without them both alike.

We may as well confess, however, that this question has no interest or meaning except for those who are hungering and thirsting for God. Some will find in their Lent a measure of "self-control," and they will do well, for it is worth finding. Some will find the means to gratify sweet charity, and they will do well; but they will all miss the mark and fall short, unless they set themselves to satisfy that divine hunger whose poignant pangs lead one to forget even food and clothing, and to satisfy themselves with that bread of which "whoso eateth shall never hunger."







XVII.

OLD AND NEW.



## XVII.

### OLD AND NEW.

Rev. E. 14.

"His head . . . was white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire."

JOHN, the last survivor of the personal friends of Jesus, an old, old man, sat musing by a summer sea. An empty world lay all about him. The hoary glory of the Orient lay out of sight beyond the eastern sea. The hoarse roar of the Empire was too far off for him to hear. He sat alone and mused of —

"The vision of the future, and the glory that would be."

He pondered of the Faith for which he had been exiled to Patmos, his brothers had been stoned at Jerusalem, crucified at Rome, scourged at Antioch, and thrown to the lions in a hundred amphitheatres. He thought of what it was, and whereunto it would grow. Like the Oriental he was, his thoughts shaped themselves into a vision. His deep questionings took outward form, and found their answer in a majestic Figure which stood beside and spoke to him. The Person whom he saw was at once the Genius of Christianity, and its Master. When John turned and looked at Him, he saw a man whose "hair

was white like wool, and his eyes were like a flame of fire." His head was hoary, but his eyes were filled with the fire of eternal youth, and his speech was as multitudinous as the many-voiced ocean.

This is the religion of Jesus: venerable as eternity; modern as the changing times; and capable always of "speaking to every man in his own tongue wherein he was born."

I want to speak to you of the Old and the New in Christianity. What in it is abiding, and what may legitimately be changed and renewed?

That there are both elements in it, all men allow in theory. But how the two may practically be distinguished and adjusted is the question which is, at this moment, exercising the Christian world. It shows itself in the regions of Doctrine, Worship, and Discipline. How shall the Church preserve her own past, and, at the same time, fit herself to the present? How shall she hold fast the Faith delivered to the Saints of long ago, and, at the same time, find room for the Faith delivered to the Saints of to-day?

How shall she pray in the ancient Liturgies, and, at the same time, find fit forms for the expression of the new aspirations growing out of the new needs of to-day?

How shall she hold fast to an old order, and yet make herself comprehended by a century whose very conception of government is different?

Was Lord Macaulay right in his dictum that, "so far as his religious condition is concerned, a Christian of the second century with his Bible was neither

better nor worse off than a Christian with his Bible in the nineteenth"?

Speaking soberly, is Christianity capable of being, in any way, touched or modified by the passing generations?

Some will at once answer, "No: by the very nature of the case. It came from the hand of the Master complete. The Spirit led the first generation into all truth, and they placed it upon record. They ordained the structure of the Church as from a pattern given in the mount. She proceeds in a path of her own, which runs parallel to the world's course, but does not touch it. If she be perplexed at any time, or at fault concerning what to believe or what to do, she should go back in her own steps until she picks up the trail, and then go on along the path marked out for her."

Well, she *is* perplexed. In every direction old arrangements are being felt to be unsatisfactory, and changes are being desired. Confessions of Faith have grown obsolete. Articles of Religion, which once were deemed sufficiently accurate and sufficiently important to be fought for or fought against; to warrant men in persecution or in martyrdom for their sakes, — are being allowed to fall into oblivion. A Liturgy which many generations pronounced "admirable" has been officially pronounced inadequate and clumsy. Doctrines like, for example, the Verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures, or the Substitutionary Theory of the Atonement, or the Miltonic Notion of the Fall, which have been deemed at times the very

core and essence of the Christian Faith, find no one now to say a good word for them.

The truth is, that from time to time the whole conception of the universe is revolutionized by some change in the habits of human thought. Such a change was compelled by Copernicus. When the earth was dethroned by him from her astronomical place at the centre of the spheres, and the sun set up in her stead, the *theology* which had adjusted itself to the old cosmogony, had to be entirely re-adjusted. It is not to be wondered at that the theologians detested Galileo. Men always dislike those who give them trouble. The trouble he gave was past all count. It compelled them to do all over again, slowly and painfully, what they had fondly thought was done and finished for all time. We smile now at their folly. Let us be quite sure that we understand the genius of Christianity better than they.

An equally profound revolution has been compelled in our time. Darwin has compelled greater changes than Copernicus did. The system of physical science and philosophy in which his name holds the place of honor has compelled the religious world to picture to itself all anew the process of creation. It has changed the connotation of the very word creation. It has compelled a re-reading of Genesis and the Apocalypse. It has expanded each creative day into an æon, and carried backward the beginning of man to a point which would have made Archbishop Ussher dizzy to contemplate. It has given a new and awful



significance to the theologic phrase "Original Sin," by showing it to be a synonym for brute inheritance. It has laid its axe to the root of the popular notion of the "Fall," and thus will compel a re-writing of all systematic Divinity. When Anthropology changes, Theology and Soteriology must be modified to correspond.

A similar change in the very substance of religion has been brought about slowly and insensibly by the spread of Democracy. The writers of the Scripture, when they spoke of the government of God, used the terms of speech with which they were familiar. But the only government they knew was that of despots. Historical Christianity is tinged all through with monarchical ideas. These have, in our day, not only ceased to be fitting, but they have, to a degree we seldom realize, ceased to be intelligible. If one were writing a Catechism to-day in America, would he counsel the child "to submit itself to all its governors, and to order itself lowly and reverently to all its betters"? But it is idle to think that men's very conceptions of human law and liberty can be profoundly modified without their ideas of Divine Laws being changed to correspond.

Speaking broadly, it is not too much to say that we Americans of to-day are as different from our fathers, say at the Reformation, as they were from the members of the Council of Nice. Our mental habits, our mental furniture, our moral judgments, the tests of truth which we instinctively apply, the forms in which our conduct moves, the very eyes with which we see Truth, are all changed.

Now, in secular things, we do not resist change. We know it to be the law of progress, and we assume progress to be desirable. We know that an institution which stagnates dies, just as an organism which ceases to grow begins to degenerate. If it could be said of any science that its text-book in use to-day is the same one which was in use fifty years ago, we would know from that fact that that science was moribund. It does not disturb us that the language which we speak has, by slow and imperceptible modification, changed itself since the time of Chaucer, so that he and we could not understand one another. Governments, laws, customs, manners, speech, — all these may change utterly, and we may gain, not lose, thereby. So far as all these things are concerned, the history of the race may be broken in two at any point without disaster. All these only concern the particular generation at any time alive.

But men have the instinct that it is not so with religion. That concerns not only the generation that now is on the earth, but those who have been as well. It looks to "the *whole* family in heaven and earth." "Where are my forefathers?" abruptly asked the old Saxon chief with his foot upon the Baptistry steps. "In hell!" replied the dogmatic priest waiting to baptize him. "Then to hell I'll go too," answered the Saxon, as he turned on his heel, and strode out of church with his brave men behind him. Religion must bind the generations together. A break of continuity in it would introduce confusion in heaven. Jesus avowed that He did not come

to destroy but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. A few years ago a review article attracted much attention. Its title was "An Advertisement for a New Religion." It dwelt at length upon the impotency of the present forms of Christianity to satisfy the present needs. It proposed a substitute, of which it sketched the main outlines. In a future number, a keen critic pointed out the absurd hopelessness of the substitute proposed. But both the Advertisement and the answer pointed the double fact that newness in the *Contents* of religion is impossible, and that newness in its methods and forms is always necessary.

Four hundred years ago the Church in Europe faced a like situation. There was a new Science and a new Philosophy, as there is to-day. The physical facts of life had changed their aspect by the discovery of a new heavens by Copernicus, and a new earth by Columbus. An intellectual ferment was working in every department of life. The language of the Church had ceased to be the language of the people. For generations she had been able to secure obedience. But an authority which does not rest upon the assent of the understanding of the subject is doomed. The Ecclesiastics had overlaid the simple order of the Church with multitudinous and vexatious ordinances. The Schoolmen, in the ages of their busy idleness, had spun their subtleties about the simple Faith, until the whole system had ceased to be intelligible. The Humanists turned away from the thought of religion with the same distaste, though without the moral earnestness, that the man

of science does to-day. Then the Reformer began his task. His work was to clear away accretions and get down to solid fact. But at every turn he confronted a doctrine or practice which, though once it had been new and strange, had long since become intrenched and venerable. When he challenged the literal "Inspiration of the Church," devout men regarded him with the same horror that devout men did him who, thirty years ago, challenged the literal "Inspiration" of the Scriptures.

They dismissed his thesis with the epigram, "There is something in it which is true, and something which is new: but the true part is not new, and the new part is not true."

But the spirit of truth was with the Reformer. It was the eternal vitality of Jesus. It compelled the whole Western Church to re-state its message. Nor was this confined to the so-called Reformed Churches. Rome also, though to a lesser degree, yielded to the same necessity. The Church of Rome owes as much to the Reformers as does Protestantism. It, also, is reformed. It learned a lesson in the sixteenth century never since forgotten. That was, that if the Church is to lead the people, it must be on such terms with them that they can mutually understand one another. And so it has come about that, from the Bishop of Rome, who used to make Concordats and sign Pragmatic Sanctions with Emperors and kings, appears now an Encyclical to working men, saying, "Come, now, let *us* reason together."

But it was Protestantism which stood for the final



authority of each man's reason and conscience as against all prescriptions. "Private Judgment," with its attendant responsibility, is the price one must pay for being a man. No man may escape from it, let him wish it ever so much. So long as it remains true that each one must bear the consequences of his own acts, both in this life and in the next, so long will it remain true that he must stand out for the right to order his own acts and thoughts. Of course, unless he be a fool, he will have regard to the judgment of his fellow-men in making up his own. But, when all is said and done, he can no more escape the necessity of acting upon his own judgment than he can escape from his own shadow. If he determine to submit himself to the authority of the Church, the act of submission is itself a supreme act of private judgment. If he accept the authority of the *ipsissima verba* of an infallible Book, or the official utterance of an infallible Man, the situation remains the same. The recognition of any "authority" whatever, outside that of "the answer of a good conscience toward God," requires the expressed or implied assent of the individual will, an assent yielded with the consent of the understanding.

A little reflection ought to make evident that authority of any sort in the domain of religion must defeat its own purpose. Neither the Bible nor the Church, nor any process of Reason, can do what God Himself cannot do; that is, to compel the spirit of a man to yield itself to God. Would the Spirit of God have continued all through the weary ages to



strive with men if there had been any authority that could have been practically applied ? The very heart of Protestantism is its recognition of the fact that individual liberty must be commensurate with individual responsibility. Unless the Church will undertake for her part to guarantee the eternal welfare of a man independently of his belief or conduct, then he must be at liberty to regulate his own belief and conduct. The Church of Rome *has* declared her readiness to do just this. She asserts her power to draw so much of merit as may be needed from the treasury of the Saints, and to set it to the credit of any sinner she may select from the millions now in purgatory. Let him believe it who can, but let it be borne in mind that this guaranty on the part of the Church is the only condition upon which a sane man would be justified in yielding her the "obedience" of which ecclesiastics sometimes prate, and which they seldom render.

The injunction to "try all things, hold fast that which is good," did not exhaust itself upon the first generation of Christians. It is always in force. In theory, no one doubts it. But when one undertakes to act upon it, he is sure to be warned, both by his own inner sense of reverence and by clamors from without, that each particular thing to which he offers to apply his test is sacred.

Let us face the question: "Is there anything in the body of Christian Doctrine, as such Doctrine has been generally accepted, which a loyal Christian and Churchman may properly challenge? If so, what ?

And which ones? Are there "closed questions?" and do all the things belong in that category which the Bishop of Springfield puts there? Is Dr. Dix right when he claims for the Church an authority of such a sort that, when she, by formal action of a General Council, puts her *imprimatur* upon any proposition, it thereafter becomes a sin for any man to question its truth. Was Urban VIII. right when he pronounced the Copernican astronomy to be contrary to Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Fathers? Was Moses Stuart right when he denounced the heresy that the earth is more than six thousand years old? Was Dean Burgon right when he declared that every chapter, verse, word, and syllable of the Bible is inspired and free from error? Is the Presbyterian Church right when they arraign their foremost Biblical scholars for teaching that Moses did not write the Pentateuch; that the Levitical system was not generally introduced until after the Captivity; that parts of Daniel are not prophecy, but history written after the fact? In a word, where is the line to be drawn between those things about which men may differ, and those things about which they must agree? which is but another way of asking, "What things are abiding, and what things are changeable, in Christianity?"

This is the problem now before the Christian world. Its solution is far from easy, but there is no escape from the necessity. Many would gladly postpone it. Many do not see why it should ever be proposed at all. Many see in the attempt the destruction of the Faith.

“Religious belief, as it lies in almost every man’s mind, is associated with beliefs erroneously supposed to be implicated in it. Beyond the truth itself, on which a man really lives, there is a mass of connected belief which not one out of a hundred either attempts to dis sever from it, or imagines it possible to dis sever. To disconnect this accretion of secondary beliefs from that which is vital is tacitly taken for granted to be impossible. That which would remain after the amputation, it is assumed would bleed to death. Religious beliefs are in the average mind so interwoven with one another by mere effect of association that, when one of them is assailed, all are thought to be in danger.”<sup>1</sup>

The difficulty is in seeing the *relative* values of institutions and doctrines; to distinguish between substance and form, between body and clothes, between the essential and the accidental in Christianity. This is the perplexing task which God, in His Providence, has laid upon us. To preserve unbroken the continued spiritual life of the Christian centuries, and at the same time be in whole-hearted sympathy with the age in which we live, — to think with it, feel with it, hope with it, speak its speech, and share its spirit — this it is to be a preacher of the gospel to-day. The most fatal thing which can befall him is a doubt of the spiritual capacity of his own generation. This is the besetting temptation of the priest. He has in mind the saints and doctors of past ages, and forgets that they also had the frailties and follies of

<sup>1</sup> Fisher: “The Grounds of Belief,” p. 454.

flesh and blood, and belonged to the same race we do. He finds it hard to think that his own contemporaries possess a spiritual insight and power of doctrinal statement equal to the men who were at Nice, or Chalcedon, or Arles, or Hampton Court, or Westminster. This leads him to attach an undue importance to the *forms* in which the men of the past stated their doctrines and framed their prayers.

It is, indeed, hard to believe that the promise of the Spirit which Jesus gave was meant to find its fulfilment, not in the first generation of disciples, but in every generation: "He shall take of the things which are mine, and shall show them unto you." Nevertheless, the truth which, it seems to me, is more important than any other to be grasped by the Church at this present, is that the nineteenth century has the same right to state the truths of Christianity for itself as did the sixteenth or the fourth, and may as certainly expect the guidance of the Holy Ghost as they.

What I mean is this: Christianity is essentially a few fundamental truths. They are the Fatherhood of God, the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, the presence in the world of a conscious Divine Spirit, a Society called the Church, composed of men and women who look confidently for a definite form of immortality. It has never lost or changed any one of these, and cannot be conceived of as doing so. But these central truths remain, practically, barren and inert until they are expanded, examined in detail, and find a lodgement in the apprehensions of indi-



viduals. The necessity of so expanding them has given rise to a large number of so-called systems of doctrine and discipline. Some of these have been formally adopted by sections of the Church, as the Augsburg Confession by the Lutherans, the Westminster Confession by the Presbyterians, the Thirty-nine Articles by the Church of England and America, and the Tridentine Formularies by Rome. They were all formulated nearly four hundred years ago. They were easily intelligible by the people to whom they were addressed. They were all popular documents. They all proposed to put what they conceived to be Christian doctrine in a portable, available form. Their promulgation was in every case immediately succeeded by a period of enormous activity and success on the part of the Church. They have never been officially withdrawn, but the Christian world has grown away from them. They have largely ceased to be intelligible. They no longer express adequately the truths which they once did express. In not a few cases, they have come to be serious stumbling-blocks to men, both within and without the Church. They state propositions which are not tenable. It is against them that popular attack is led. Dr. Draper, Professor Huxley, Mr. Ingersoll, *et id genus omne*, find their occupation here. Now, the ground is often practically taken, and sometimes avowed, that we ought to cling to them until we are *forced* to abandon them; that we should part with the traditional opinion only when the concession is extorted by evidence no longer to be withstood. "Never yield an inch of ground



until it is found impossible to hold it." No policy could, it seems to me, be more foolish or more un-Christ-like. Surely, it is not the part of the Church to hold a position which should never have been taken, until the defenders are forced to abandon it and seek another, grumbling and discouraged!

Dissatisfaction with many of the current statements of Christian truth is making itself felt on every hand. In one body a committee is appointed to draw up a new creed, and report it to the next council; in another, a movement for the revision of the confession is going forward. One group of dissatisfied seek for a truer statement among the mediæval formularies. Another set content themselves with preaching about the absurdities of Orthodoxy. Another class stands in its pulpit and laments the decadence of the old, simple docility, and finds in the specific principle of Protestantism the necessary eclipse of Faith. But none are unmoved by the spirit of the time. Even the Catholic scholars of Oxford band together, under the leadership of the Principal of Pusey House, to re-examine the Church's doctrine. What does it all mean? Is the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be supplanted by a new Gospel? Has the Faith once delivered to the saints been lost? And are men groping blindly to re-discover it? Has the genius of Christianity grown old and purblind?

I reply: this restlessness is not the nervousness of senility, but the product of the ever youthful vigor of the majestic person St. John saw at Patmos. Surely, no one who looks with open eyes at the facts

of life to-day can fail to recognize the strong Son of God going forth to war! The love of truth for truth's sake, which marks the science of this age, that enthusiasm of humanity which shelters the outcast, strives to reform the criminal, makes laws to protect the sailor, taxes the rich to educate the children of the poor, builds hospitals, asylums, homes, nurses the sick, commands the rarest surgical skill and the costliest anaesthetic for the beggar's brat, that deep sense of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man which refuses to be content with the structure of society, until the weakest shall be guaranteed his place and share at the banquet of life, — what are all these but the manifestations of the Son of Man? The task of the Christian preacher is to translate this deep and widespread ethical spirit of Christ into intelligible words. The voice of Jesus which John heard "o'er land and sea" was a multitudinous voice. "Like the sound of many waters." It speaks like the roaring of a torrent or the rush of an ocean wind, but it also speaks like the lapping of the incoming tide and the murmur of the thousand springs breaking up out of the earth. One who has been used for a long time to hear the voice of God in some single monotone, misses many a sound which is as really His voice. It is literally true that "day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."

I think I appreciate the dislike that many have to this whole manner of speaking and thinking. It

seems to them to resolve Christianity into a vague, formless influence which cannot be identified at any particular point. They love precision. They want to state their doctrine in clear, definite, categorical propositions. They ask, in exasperation, "Does a man, then, hold his creed without knowing precisely either what it contains or how long it can be retained without revision?" They wish *finality* in doctrine.

They would have the Church's forms of faith and mode of life fixed once and for all.

I sympathize with the wish and share in it: — if it only could be! But, alas, fixity is only possible to dead things! Only by endless integration and disintegration is life possible. The Orthodox Eastern Church stands to-day an awful warning before the face of Christendom. Centuries ago she lost the power of motion. She said, "As I am, will I remain through all the ages." And so she sits, a spectacle in her Basilica. Old she is, but not venerable. Her hair is hoary, but the fire of youth is all gone from her leaden eyes. Wrapt in her embroidered vestments, she slumbers on, as powerless to touch or to be touched by the life of the flesh-and-blood men and women of Russia and Greece as the mummy of Seti is that of the Felaheen of Egypt.

Thank God, the Church in England and America has retained the power of motion! The life which thrills in her is, in our day, seeking new forms of expression. The fundamental facts of her life do not change, of course. The Apostles' Creed and the general structure of the Church are as changeless as the

architectural design of the human body or the constant faculties of the human soul. I cannot imagine why any one should be uneasy as to their continuity. Surely, the apostolic men were not. "The removal of those things that are shaken signifieth those things that are made, that *those things which cannot be shaken may remain!*" They do not ask the exemption of any article from this process of "shaking." They rest serenely in the confidence of its power to maintain itself.

It will be well for you to bear in mind that our Gospel is as multiform as are the myriad-faced aspects of human life. In order to be efficient, it must be spoken so that every man will "hear it in that tongue in which he was born;" that is to say, it must be stated in terms of that inner speech which is not the same in any two men. The preacher is only the interpreter. He takes the words of God, and "targums" them to men. He must do this so that neither their sanctity nor the meaning be missed. He must "speak with tongues." To do this he must know men and love them. He must know his own age and love it. He must believe in it. He must be quick to detect the motions of the Spirit of God in the movements of society, and be able to interpret the voices which the Spirit is striving to utter. He will remember that the Truth which he proclaims is older than the Reformation, older than the Councils, as old as God! The glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of Prophets, the noble army of Martyrs, the venerable line of Patriarchs, the shining



host of angels, have all shared in it. To each the Spirit of God has made it intelligible in part, but not exhaustively, "God having provided some better thing for us, that they *without us* should not be made perfect." The Spirit of Christ is as protean as is life, for "the Spirit *is* life." This is why it is safe against all assaults of its opponents. They cannot find it. When the crowd would cast Jesus down from the rock, and so make an end of Him, He always passes away out of their midst. But it is only to reappear again to some other man or group of men.

I bid you, then, not to be dismayed by the doctrinal unrest of this our day. It is but the shaking which God has ordained. Those things which cannot be shaken will remain; and those things which can be shaken *ought* not to remain.

Let me commend to you the strong words of one of our greatest preachers.

"Our Faith can suffer and grow pale only if we shut it out from the increasing light, and fancy it will abide in darkness. The clear shining of knowledge may dissipate a thousand fancies which we have mistaken for realities; but it shall bring to faith health and vigor and new life. While many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased, Christianity cannot be preserved as a cloistered virtue or a scholastic art; but out in the breezy world, under the open sky, rejoicing in the light, its strength shall not be abated nor its eye grow dim. Reverently and humbly, but nothing doubting, the Christian of our



day may follow wherever new paths of knowledge seem opening to his approach; and though he go down into the depths, or wander through realms of strange shadows and endless confusions, nevertheless, if he remains true to the Spirit sent for his guidance, like Dante following Beatrice from world to world, — he shall find himself walking in a cloud of light, full of all melodious voices.”

XVIII.

THE FIRST ADAM.



## XVIII.

### THE FIRST ADAM.

Gen. III. 22.

“And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.”

A WELL-KNOWN writer in a well-known Review lately made this statement:—

“It is easy to see that the ‘New Theology’ is about prepared to join hands with Darwinianism, and obliterate the doctrine of the Fall as underlying the fact that ‘the Word was made flesh.’”

It is the peculiarity of the ‘New Theology’ that no one is officially authorized to speak for it, but I venture to think that the above statement will be silently admitted by those who are under its influence as being substantially true. I venture also to say *why* this judgment is accepted by those in whom it has reached the distinctness of a judgment.

The existence of moral evil is not denied by any.

There are in the field three theories as to its origin and nature. Of course these theories are not held distinctly and unmixed. The same person may, and, in point of fact, often does, hold mutually antagonis-

tic fragments of different theories in doctrine and philosophy and may be as strenuous in support of one part of his contradictory creed as of another. But in the case before us the three theories are easily separable, in thought at least.

(1.) The first is that of what for convenience' sake may be called "orthodoxy."

According to it there was, long ago, a primeval world which was a paradise. It had a genial climate and a fertile soil. No ice-bound oceans or burning deserts, no thorns or brambles, no predacious beast or pestilential wind, were there. The world was young and wholesome. No nerve had ever thrilled with pain, nor any living creature looked upon the face of death. The plains were smiling with perennially golden grain, and the forest bountiful with pendent fruit. In this Paradise God walked, and was lonely. In it He set the newly fashioned Adam, the first individual of his race. Into his arms He graciously gave the maiden Mother of us all. He created them immortal. Their wisdom was transcendent; their innocence absolute.

But with Adam God made a covenant. The matter of the agreement was, that perfect obedience and unbroken righteousness would be rewarded by continual bliss, and warranty against pain and death; and that for disobedience the punishment should be capital. The parties to the agreement were God of the first part, and Adam the party of the second part. Adam did not enter into the covenant for himself alone, but as the representative of all his race



yet unbegotten. They were to have their chance in him, and to stand forfeit if he failed. (Whether the covenant were to remain in force eternally, or whether, after a certain time passed in obedience, he was to have been confirmed in an indefeasible right, does not appear.) The simple test for the first man's power of moral endurance was to be his abstention from a certain attractive kind of fruit in the garden where he dwelt. An insidious tempter appeared from some unknown and unsuspected quarter, enlisted the more pliable nature of Eve on the side of disobedience, and through her broke down the moral resistance of man. He failed in the test, and catastrophe unspeakable was let loose! Smitten suddenly with shame and pain, the offenders crept away already moribund. The voice of God rolling in thunder discovered their hiding-place. The flashing lightning of an offended heaven burned between them and their bower. The jealous earth shot up from her bosom the "upas and the deadly nightshade" among the kindly forest, and choked the wheat with thorns and brambles. The wild beasts, filled, for the first time with cruel rage and hunger, rent and devoured one another. The natures of the offenders themselves underwent a sudden ferment, which left them transformed and totally depraved. Their unborn children not only inherited the taint, but were bound by all the penalties appended to the original contract broken by their father and representative. Thus death physical and moral, the depravity of every son of Adam, and all the thousand ills that

flesh is heir to, both in this world and in any world yet to come, are all the outcome of that transaction which, in popular religion and in technical theology, is named "The Fall." Most Continental and American theology is based upon this notion. So unconventional a thinker as Dr. Bushnell has a strange chapter induced by the theory. If death literally came by Adam, how then to account for its undoubted dominion over the lower animals for æons before Adam was made? The "dragons weltering in their prime" lived by tearing one another, and were so equipped by nature that they could not live otherwise. Dr. Bushnell, seeing this difficulty, hits upon the ingenious theory of what he calls "The anticipative consequences of sin."<sup>1</sup> That is, the sin which was to be, cast its shadow backward, and covered the earth from its beginning!

The theory before us cannot be more clearly stated than in the words of the "Larger Catechism" appended to the Westminster Confession of Faith: "The 'Fall' brought upon mankind the loss of communion with God, His displeasure and curse, so that we are by nature children of wrath, bond slaves to Satan, and justly liable to all punishment in this world and the world to come."

Now, whence came this notion? In the *Old Testament* there is no allusion to it whatever. There every case of moral obliquity is referred to the deliberate and wanton choice of the person offending. His fault is never modified, or the quality of his

<sup>1</sup> Nature and Supernatural, ch. vii.

guilt deemed to be affected, by his relation to Adam. He is in every case accounted worthy or blameworthy, not for what he is *qua* man, but for what he does of his own choice.<sup>1</sup>

The "Fall" is *never referred to by Jesus* in any form. If His words and precepts stood alone in the New Testament the transaction would be overlooked completely. He concerns Himself with the springs of human conduct as they exist now. He uncovers and fortifies new and obscured motives. He refers righteousness to the indwelling of the Spirit of God, but never refers sin to the indwelling of the spirit of Adam.

In the *Apocalypse*, which unfolds the last scenes in the drama of humanity, there is no reference to a great catastrophe at its beginning, and the *dénouement* would seem to be incompatible with such a first act.

The *Catholic Creeds* are entirely silent concerning it. The Articles of the Christian Faith, assent to which is a condition precedent to membership in the Christian Church, have nothing whatever to say concerning the transaction known as the "Fall."

From all this it seems evident, that if the "New Theology" sits somewhat loosely to this theory, it does not thereby argue itself to be irreverent towards the highest authority or indifferent to fundamental truth.

The portion of Christian Scripture by which the

<sup>1</sup> Edersheim: "Life of Christ," vol. i., book 1. "*It is entirely unknown also to Rabbinical Judaism.*"

theory has been always upheld is St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, the fifth chapter, beginning at the twelfth verse. To the untheological reader the meaning is sufficiently evident. The propagandist of the new Faith declares that his principal, Jesus of Nazareth, is of divine origin, and has moral relations with every human being. But, just as all men are affected by the character and actions of their original ancestor "Adam," so the whole race stands affected by the character and actions of the Second "Adam." This seems to be all that the writer had in mind. He is concerned with the position of Jesus, and only uses the accepted story of Adam as an illustration and analogy, good for what is good. But instead of being allowed to remain in the subordinate position of an analogy, it has unfortunately been elevated into a capital position among Christian dogmas.

The history of the dogma is, in rough lines, easily traced.<sup>1</sup> It was developed by that great system builder, Augustine. It passed, together with the rest of his theology, into general acceptance in the Western Church. It was elaborated into curious detail during the busy idleness of the scholastic period. Dante popularized the story of the Edenic Paradise for the Latin races, as did Milton for the English-speaking people. Luther, the Augustinian monk, brought the theory with him from his cloister. Calvin accepted it from his master Augustine, and made it the starting-point of his system. Through these various channels it has come since the Refor-

<sup>1</sup> Hagenbach: "History of Doctrine," p. 59.



mation into the popular mind to be the accepted Christian teaching concerning the moral status of man.

That the theory, both in itself and in its consequences, is entirely untenable would seem to be evident from merely stating it. It is so well intrenched, however, that more than this is necessary. To any one who has come under the influence of that mode of thinking known as evolutionary, such a catastrophe as that of the "Fall" is *a priori* incredible. Such a thing is out of analogy, both natural and spiritual. On the face of it (if it be so read), it is a case of sudden and violent degradation interjected between two periods of steady progress. Up to the date of the "Fall," and from that date forward, the progress is undenied. Instances of degradation, both in individuals and families, are very common, but they differ from this alleged one in that they are *slow, final, and irretrievable*. Their subjects are left stranded on one side of the stream of progress. There is no farther use for them, and they cease to be. The Miltonic "Fall," on the other hand, is sudden, inconclusive, and the penal cause assigned is no sufficient *rationale* in the absence of any moral or religious obligation to accept the fact. The "total depravity" supposed to have been the consequence of this transaction is not a fact, and never has been. A human being without inherent moral goodness—inherent in the same way as his humanity itself—is something no one has ever seen. It has been imagined in technical theology, but its actual counterpart



is to be looked for, not in any man or woman, but in Mephistopheles or a Houyhnhnm. Apart from the somewhat artificial language of the pulpit, neither the idea nor the fact ever occurs.

The associated dogma of inherited guilt is practically obsolete also. True, it survives in the standards of some Christian bodies, but it has ceased to be a conviction to which one may appeal to influence conduct. What preacher would dare to assert boldly, "You deserve to be damned for your share in Adam's act of disobedience"?

The dogma is no longer held on the authority of Augustine, or rejected with Pelagius; it has simply fallen out of sight in consequence of its intrinsic unworthiness and essential immorality. The "New Theology" does not accept it or reject it; it passes it by.

(2.) The theory has in some quarters been rudely displaced by another, which *seems* to be radically opposed to it. Indeed, the place occupied by it is the one most strenuously fought for by all the forces at present in the field. The Theist, the Secularist, the Evolutionist, or the Christian, — whichever one is able to capture and hold this ground, — possesses the key to the battle of modern thought. *What is the ground and origin of human Right and Wrong?* Whoso holds the key to this will win the battle. For, practically, men value morals above all else. It is admitted on all hands that the sense of right and wrong does exist, and that it is, in its degree, at any rate, the distinguishing mark of man. But the real

question is, "Whence comes it, and in what consists its binding force?" Those of the extreme Right say it is an original endowment of man from God, formerly perfect, but now shattered and untrustworthy. Those of the extreme Left say, without hesitation, that it is a faculty which has been slowly developed in man out of the interaction of himself and his fellows with their surroundings. In the crude barbarianism which they consider to be the original status of the race, certain actions were quickly found to tend to the general welfare, while certain other actions were found to work detriment to the tribe. The first sort of course tended to the popularity, and the second brought pain or danger to the individual producing them. The glow of satisfaction produced in the doer of helpful things encouraged him to the habit of such actions. Murder, theft, adultery, having been found to be dangerous to the community, were warmly reprehended. This public sense of dislike to the deeds reacted upon the individuals who felt it, gradually became fixed in each one, and was transmitted to his descendants. It had its origin in the public weal. It emerges, however, generations afterwards, in a permanent faculty, which "had lost its memory and changed its name." Nor has it remained the simple faculty it was when it first became self-conscious. Long afterward it, in Mr. Matthew Arnold's happy figure, came to be touched by the fire of Emotion, and burst into the flame of Religion. Since the death of the late Professor Clifford, this theory has not had another so able and uncom-

promising an advocate. With certain modifications due to his more cautious and judicious habit of mind, it is the doctrine of Mr. Herbert Spencer. In popular scientific periodicals it is assumed to have been demonstrated. It has found a lodgement in the text-books of schools. It is the basis of action for "Societies for Ethical Culture." The theory is claimed to be, in Professor Clifford's language, "a scientific basis for morals." That very prevalent habit of mind which abhors an unsolved problem as nature abhors a vacuum, receives and rests upon it with peculiar satisfaction. Wherever this theory and the popular notion of the "Fall" are sole rivals claiming entertainment by educated men, this one is almost certain of a welcome.

And this, notwithstanding the fact that it is attended by the very gravest difficulties, both scientific and moral. The more sober-minded evolutionists, whether Christian or Secular, do not accept it. They do not consider it scientific. The facts in the case cannot be co-ordinated under it. The savage state where the conscience is supposed by the holders of it first to emerge is precisely the place where the possessor of moral sensibility would be most unfit to survive. Where might is right, right is doomed to death. Among unmoral creatures, any variation in the direction of morality tends toward the extinction of its possessor. The faculty coming into existence there is compelled by the exigency of the case to commit hari-kari. It is "too good to live." "The survival of the fittest" is an irrefragable law, which

may not be suspended even in the interest of moral theory.

Then, again, the induction upon which its advocates base the scientific theory of morals is open to the grave suspicion of having been arranged in the interest of the theory. In the nature of the case the facts are difficult to come by, and one cannot help suspecting that the same skill (as of Sir John Lubbock, *e.g.*) which arranges them in one way could just as easily sort and arrange them so as to produce an entirely different result. Within the historic period, at any rate, there has not as yet been forthcoming any instance of a tribe or people making moral advance without the aid of light brought to them *ab extra*. In many instances a very high degree of civilization has been attained to by their unaided development. A Venus di Milo, and a code of Roman Law, have proven themselves to be within reach, but not a Sister of Charity, or a John Baptist.

Present facts are also against the theory. There is no constant relation between knowledge and goodness, nor is there any evidence of a tendency now on the part of the vicious to learn righteousness by the bitterness of their experience in sin. The theory, indeed, is discredited by the eagerness with which the chronic wrong-doer accepts it. Anarchists, Socialists, Ingersollites, — the whole ignoble company of questionable morality — hail it as truth. One cannot avoid the feeling that it is, at least in part, welcome because it lightens the stress of moral obli-



gation. The charge of Lacordaire would seem to be at least colorable, that "it consoles us for our vices by calling them necessities, bringing in as a witness to this a corrupt heart disguised in the mantle of science."

(3.) But the two theories above indicated are not the only claimants to a hearing upon the question of the moral progression of man. A third, contained compendiously in Genesis ii. and iii., and writ large in the whole Christian Scriptures, we believe.

The story in Genesis is too familiar to need rehearsing. It will suffice to point out that it assumes to be a distinct account of a veritable occurrence. It is sharply separated from what precedes and follows in the narrative, though evidently related to both. Like the portion of the story which precedes it, it moves with majestic stride, an æon in a paragraph, with space for a year of God's days between verses. It is couched in a language so Oriental and so poetic that even Augustine warned against dangerous literalness here.

The first chapter, and to the fourth verse of the second, sketches the whole of creation, from the chaotic nebulous mist to the introduction of the creature fashioned in the image of God, which is called "Adam," *i.e.*, man. This sketch is the mighty frame into which all that comes after is to be fitted. This having been completed, it proceeds to recount the history of the creation in which the whole long-drawn movement has culminated. It refers most



briefly to the preparation of the earth to his use,<sup>1</sup> connects him as to his physical side with matter,<sup>2</sup> endows him with life,<sup>3</sup> and then enters upon the history of *the development of man's moral and religious life*, which is the subject matter of the Old and New Testament Scriptures. This progress is conceived to be by a *series of continually recurring selections*. The first of these is recorded in the story before us. There is no intimation there that "Adam" and "Eve" were the absolute beginning of the race. There is nothing in the word *Adam* to indicate whether it means man, or is a proper name for an individual. It may mean either. In point of fact, it is used in both senses — as the word "day" is used both for the whole time covered by the creative process and for one of its periods. For the writer of Genesis, having for his purpose to narrate the moral development of the race, it was sufficient to begin where that began. To this end he states that God took a man and a woman, — (*i.e.* a family), — set them in circumstances where the new faculty with which He had endowed them would have its proper and necessary environment. That this selection left to the natural process of degradation those who were not chosen would seem probable from the following considerations: —

1. It is in the analogy of God's method of dealing with men since history has recorded the same. Thus Genesis occupies itself only with the fortunes of Seth and his line. Cain, his brother, is

<sup>1</sup> Gen. ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ib. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Ib. 7.

permitted to wander to the land of Nod,<sup>1</sup> where he founded a nation, — a nation which passed through the stages of pastoral life,<sup>2</sup> concentration in cities,<sup>3</sup> developed the industries, blossomed into art, burst into music,<sup>4</sup> and then passed forever out of sight and hearing. Abraham is selected from his Acadian followers, while they are left to complete the cycle of a civilization untouched by any divine Spirit, and then sink into their decay. Isaac is taken, and Ishmael is left. Jacob is chosen, and Esau rejected, — and so following. “One shall be taken, and the other left” seems to have been the method of God’s procedure always. Selection implies a corresponding rejection. The Bible is as remorseless as science itself. For the purpose of Scripture, moral fitness is the test. The calling of Adam would seem to be only the first of many such selections, not differing in kind from that of Abraham.

2. In certain obscure nooks and corners of the earth, there exist small groups of creatures, which, while among men, seem not to be of them.<sup>5</sup> They have in their persons and their languages traces of better days. They seem to have been left stranded by the stream of development. So low in the scale of intelligence, so destitute of moral sense, are they, that it is difficult for one to look upon them and believe that they belong to the race which has the first Adam at its start and the second Adam at its culmination.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Ib. iv. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Ib. iv. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ib. iv. 22.

<sup>5</sup> For example: the Bushmen, the Australian aborigines, the Veddahs of Ceylon, etc.

3. Traditions of the "Fall" are only found among those whose ancestry can be traced to a common origin, or who have come in contact with the race of Adam at some point in their history.

A family is chosen by God, and led by His providence into a fertile and well-watered country,<sup>1</sup> rich in gold and precious stones,<sup>2</sup> surrounded by the flora and fauna<sup>3</sup> which are the concomitants always of civilization.<sup>4</sup> In these surroundings occur that chapter in human history, which, whether relatively or absolutely the beginning, is, at any rate, a supreme epoch. It is the beginning of human religion.

The story sounds far away, and strange. To one who is accustomed to the precision of modern scientific statements, it even seems grotesque, — an echo of the childish stories of a youthful world! Taken broadly, however, it manifests an insight which on any theory, save the Christian, it would be folly to look for in such an early time. It rests morality upon those clear foundations where the broad *communis sensus* of intelligent and upright men instinctively look for it. It declares: —

1. *A personal God who can speak.*
2. *A human faculty which can hear.*
3. *A power of will which can choose.*
4. *That the essence of wrong-doing consists, not in damage to the community, but in disobedience to God.*

<sup>1</sup> Gen. ii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ib. ii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ib. ii. 9. 20.

<sup>4</sup> It seems hardly necessary to point out that "Garden" in this connection is a misleading term. The idea of extremely limited space, which the word conveys, is foreign to the story. "*Paradise*," in its classical use, is better. The idea is, an expanse of park-like territory.

This new family of Adam, alone of all creatures, having reached the stage of knowing right and wrong, have their new-born faculty nourished and developed by food convenient, and in a fit environment. In the garden of the world they feed upon the fruit of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil." "Forbidden" fruit it is indeed, — food which may be eaten only at a dreadful risk. Knowledge brings judgment always, and must pay the price of its being. When moral faculty rises to the state of self-consciousness, brute-like innocence is left behind forever. The way of return is closed as by Cherubim with fiery swords. Profound degradation is possible thereafter, but *not* along the lines by which the creature came. He can move downward but not backward. His fellowship is no longer with the gentle creatures of the garden, whose nature he heretofore shared, but with their Maker and their God.

"And the Lord God said: Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put forth his hand and take of the tree of life and live forever, — therefore the Lord God sent him forth from Eden; and He placed at the East of the garden Cherubim, with flaming sword which turned every way."

"And so I live, you see,  
Go through the world, try, prove, reject,  
Prefer, still struggling to effect  
My warfare; happy that I can  
Be crossed and thwarted as a man,  
Not left, in God's contempt, apart,  
With ghastly, smooth life, dead at heart,  
Tame in Earth's paddock as her prize!"



Of the outcome of the transaction, there can be no doubt. It was clearly great gain, — maybe a falling short of the best then possible, but clearly a rise above what went before. Something better still did come into the field of moral vision, even then. The “Tree of Life,” the possibility of immortality, was there. But it came into sight only, a long way off, and out of reach. Only as a memory and a hope did it survive in the tedious steps of progress, until, in the fulness of time, the perfect Man “brought life and immortality to light.”

Moreover, there comes crawling upon the stage, the wily, ignoble representative of moral Evil. When man emerges as a moral being, he must take his place, perforce, in the league of spiritual states. He has thenceforth to do with many interests. He is a “being of large discourse, looking before and after.” It is no fantastic Oriental conceit which introduces Satan to the first man who could comprehend his forked speech. That man *must* confront the Eternal Nay in virtue of his station. The doctrine of supernatural evil is developed in the Christian Scriptures *pari passu* with the process of redemption. The Christian smiles when he hears the fact of such existence called in question. He is quite aware that in the Secular Creed there is no Prince of Darkness. But he knows also that there be a thousand things not dreamed of by that philosophy. He reads hopefully the obscure prophecy of better things to be attained through much pain, by the seed of the woman, and he knows that much of that evil is



neither brute nor human. If it were, he should despair of the race at the outset. His solace and his ground of hope, when the brute within him is turbulent and the spirit of man is overladen, is the consideration that "it is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me."

The first of these theories, briefly sketched, is propounded by the popular and so-called "Orthodoxy;" the second by the Secular Science; the third by the Christian Scriptures. The first is moribund. The second is dangerous. The third is substantially true. Make what allowance one will for the obscurity, the puerility, of the story, the fact still remains, that the moral progress of the race has been but the developing of the picture there sketched in broad outline. He whose way of thinking has been most profoundly impressed by the great thought of Evolution comprehends it best. He finds himself caught in the sweep of a majestic movement similar in kind to that which he has followed from the monad to the man. Here again, as at other times, the progress halted, either helpless or at fault, and God vouchsafed the gift of a new motive force. Here His Gift is nothing less than the inbreathing of His own spirit. It endows its recipient with that Divine quality in virtue of which he is capable, under suitable conditions, of being "born again." It accounts for the complex and contradictory impulses which contend in the arena of the soul. It accounts for the old man as well as the new. It tells him the name and origin and limitation of the strange tempter which whispers in the secret chambers of his heart. It brings him

in sight of immortality, and bids him long and strive mightily therefor. It bids him work amid briers and thorns ; but when he lifts up his face he hears that "he has become as one of us." It binds him to God. It gives him sanction for conduct, and hope for infinite progression. It sets him in the sweep of a dramatic movement. It accounts for the faults of the patriarch, for the faith of the apostle, and the faultlessness of the Perfect Man.



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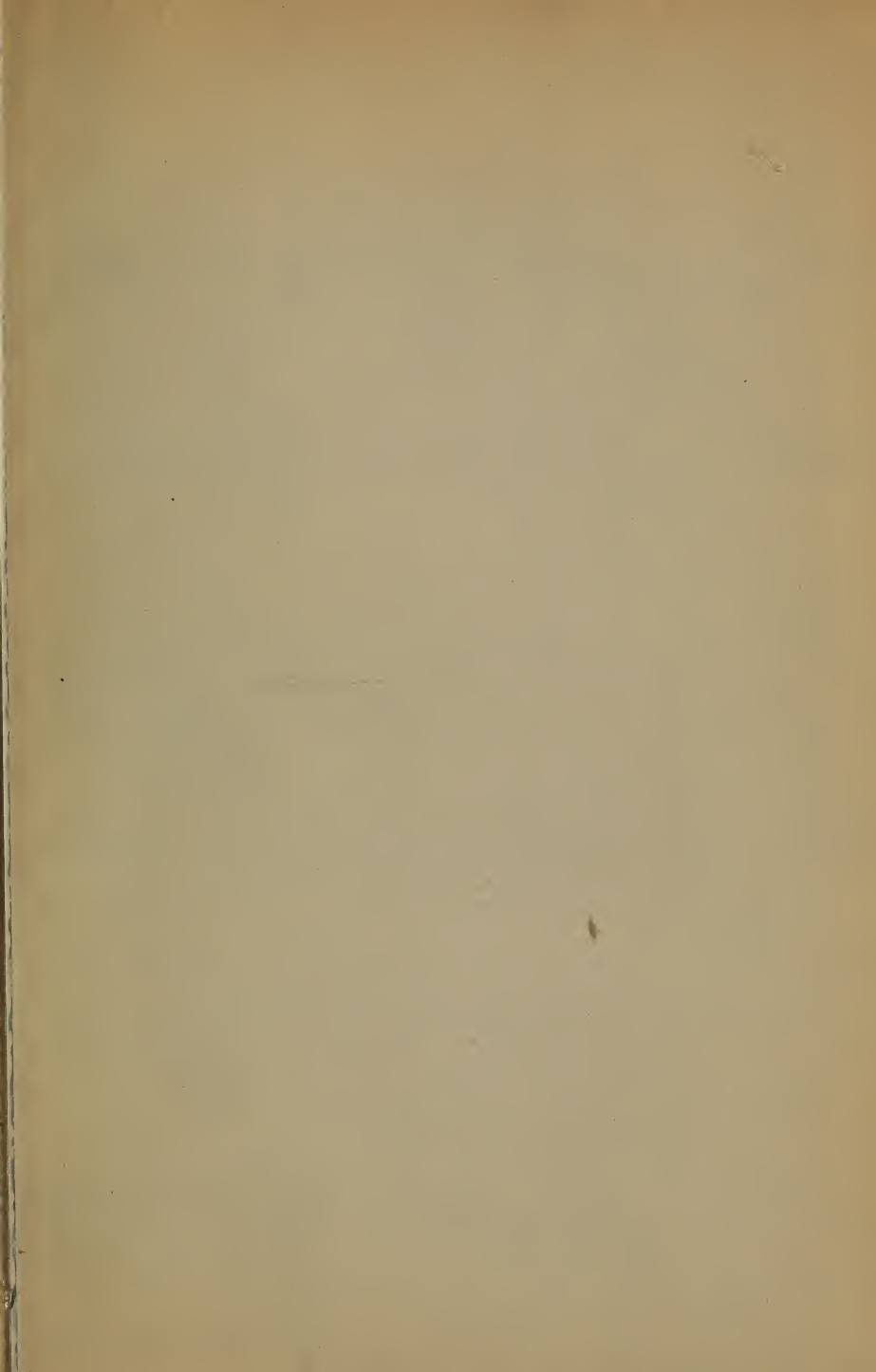
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